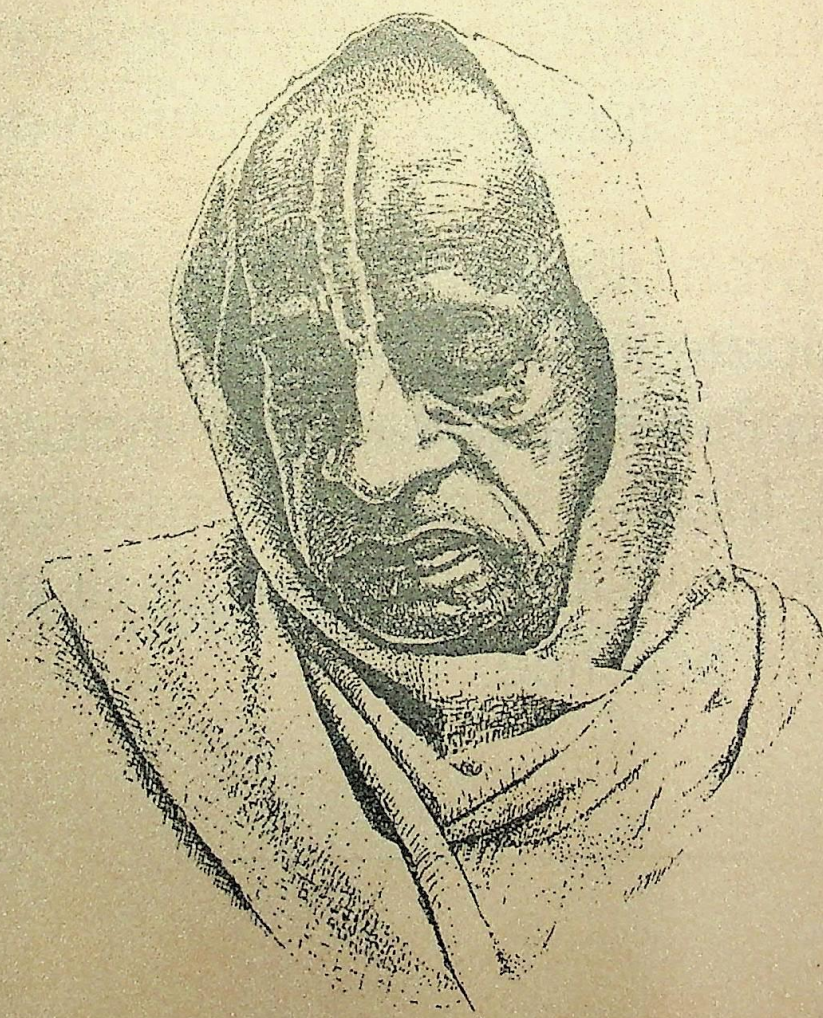


# Prabhupāda's Order

A reply to 'The Final Order' by the Ministry for the Protection of ISKCON



ALSO FEATURING:

Disciple of my Disciple

by Badrinarayan Dasa, Giridhari Swami, Umapati Swami

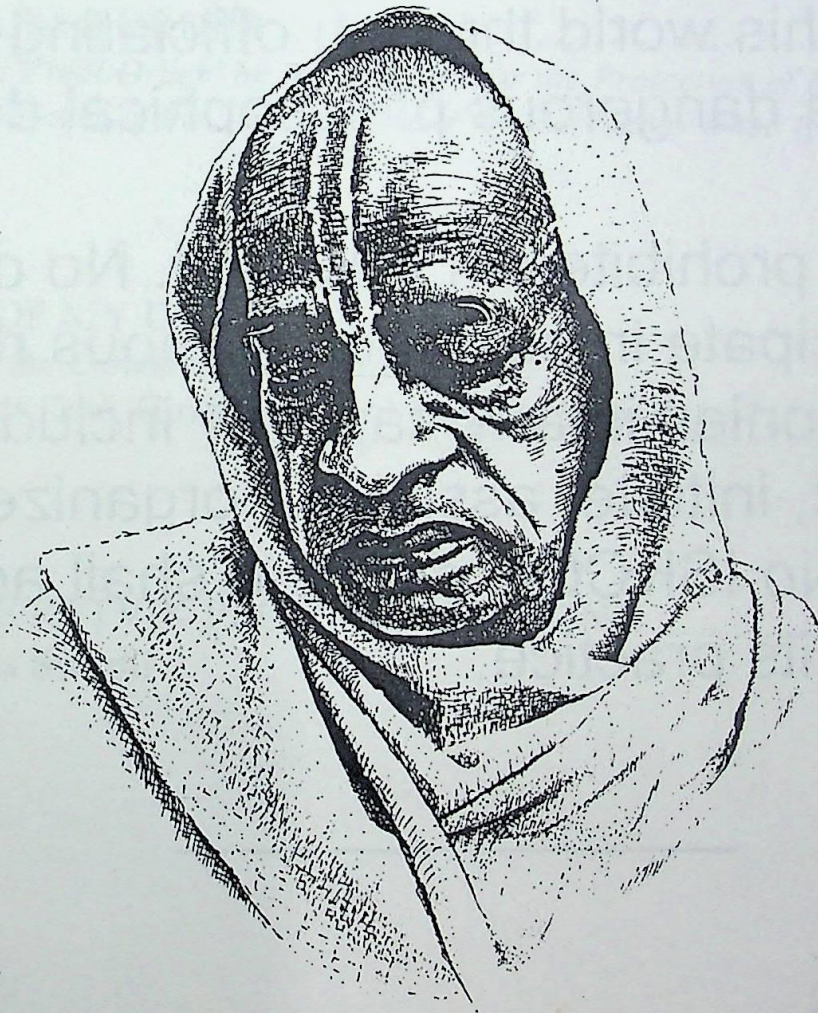
Where the Rttvik People are Wrong

by Jayadvalta Swami



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**The GBC has already officially rejected the rtvik heresy, in the following resolution:**

"The doctrine that Srila Prabhupada continues to initiate direct diksa disciples after his departure from this world through officiating priests (rtviks) is a dangerous philosophical deviation.

It is totally prohibited in ISKCON. No devotee shall participate in such posthumous rtvik initiation ceremonies in any capacity including acting as rtvik, initiate, assistant, organizer, or financier. No ISKCON devotee shall advocate or support its practice."

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1. PRABHUPADA'S ORDER

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# 'Prabhupada's Order'

A reply to 'The Final Order' by the  
Ministry for the Protection of ISKCON

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# 1. Introduction

The late eighties and early nineties saw the rise and fall of *ritvik* theory—a philosophy that teaches that Srila Prabhupada wanted to continue as the only *diksa* guru for ISKCON after his departure from the world, and that his disciples were to take the role of proxies and perform initiation ceremonies on his behalf, certifying the new disciples as Srila Prabhupada's. This same theory reappeared 2-3 years ago with new, more articulate writers, but the philosophy and rationale was the same. Since then, many papers for and against *ritvik* theory have been produced. Of these, 'The Final Order' (henceforward TFO), written by Krishna Kanta Desai, has become prominent in trying to establish this doctrine as standard practice in ISKCON.

In this paper we intend to show the overwhelming evidence to support the acceptance by the GBC that Srila Prabhupada wanted the traditional system of '*parampara*' or disciplic succession to continue after his departure from this world. Although Srila Prabhupada stressed that he would always remain the Founder-Acharya and primary instructing spiritual master for the whole society, in the future there would be many initiating spiritual masters who would accept disciples on behalf of Lord Krishna and the disciplic succession.

The purpose of this paper is not to refute point by point TFO, but to give a general overview of the main claims of the paper, and *ritvik* theories in general, and examine the supporting evidence for these theories compared to the evidence for following the traditional *parampara* system.

Above all else, however, we will attempt to understand more clearly what is the actual desire of the Founder-Acharya of ISKCON, His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. The Vedic system of knowledge stresses the importance of submissive aural reception from authorities as the best way to receive real knowledge. The other two methods, namely direct perception and speculative hypothesis, are fraught with ineptitudes due to our conditioned nature. Therefore, if we want real knowledge according to the Vedic method, we must simply try to understand what was Srila Prabhupada's desire for the pushing on of his movement, without applying any of our own interpretations or speculations on what he has instructed.

We begin by presenting a short explanation of the term *ritvik*, and then present a chronology of statements made by Srila Prabhupada in his lectures, letters and conversations between the years 1966-1977. Then we examine his instructions with reference to some of the major claims made by TFO and other *ritvik*-theory papers, and give a comparative study of Prabhupada's descriptions of the *ritvik* philosophy with that of the traditional *parampara* understanding. Next we look at two sets of instructions given by Prabhupada in 1977 which *ritvik*-theorists use to support their claims, and then discuss some of the journalistic techniques which have been utilized in the preparation of TFO.

In the appendix, we have presented some articles that have been recently published on the *ritvik* debate, giving more detail on the different arguments, and also a first-hand account of one devotee's experience of living in a *ritvik* temple.

We will attempt to present this paper in a format that is concise and easy to understand, so that all devotees can familiarize themselves with the essential arguments without having to wade through hundreds of pages of manuscript.



## 2. Definition of “ritvik”

by Hridayananda dasa Goswami

The word *ritvik* is a combination of two elements:

1. *rtu* means, in Monier-Williams (MW), "any settled point of time, fixed time, time appointed for any action, especially for sacrifices and other regular worship, thus the right time, etc." In the Bhagavatam and Mahabharata, the word usually means "season." For example, a woman's fertile "season" is called *rtu-kala*. Similarly, when we hear of seasons being disturbed or inverted in Kali-yuga, the word is usually *rtu*.

2. *ij* comes from the root *yaj*, "to sacrifice." In the word *ritvik*, the 'v' comes from the 'u' of *rtu*, and the 'k' comes from 'j'. I will spare you more technical explanations of the phonetic rules that cause this.

Thus *ritvik* means, in MW, "sacrificing at the proper time, sacrificing regularly; a priest (usually four are enumerated, viz. *Hotr*, *Adhvaryu*, *Brahman*, and *Udgatr* etc." These are the well-known priests that officiate at Vedic ritualistic sacrifices.

The significant point here is that terms such as *ritvik-guru* and *ritvik-acharya* simply do not exist. There is no such term in any Sanskrit dictionary, nor in any recognized Vedic literature, to my knowledge. There is no such term because there is no such concept. In other words, our friends are proposing something that does not exist in Vedic culture. This is the main problem with it.



### 3. Chronology of Srila Prabhupada's instructions

*guru-mukha-padma-vakya, cittete koriya aikya,  
ar na koriho mane asa*

"Our only wish is to have our consciousness purified  
by the words emanating from his lotus mouth."

The proponents of the theory of *rivik* or proxy initiations claim that an aspiring disciple can approach another devotee and receive initiation from him on behalf of the previous acharya. In contrast to this, Srila Prabhupada often states that a devotee must directly approach a bona-fide spiritual master who is coming in the line of disciplic succession and take initiation from him.

In TFO, the author claims that not only did Srila Prabhupada instruct his disciples to institute an initiation by proxy system in his final days, but that he had planned to implement such a system for many years before his departure. With this chronology we will demonstrate the remarkable consistency of instructions on the issue of initiation and succession from Srila Prabhupada over many years. Throughout the whole time of his preaching in the west, Prabhupada often stresses the importance of the traditional *parampara* system, requests his own disciples to themselves become qualified spiritual masters and continue the disciplic succession. We feel that by simply reading these quotes of Srila Prabhupada, one can clearly understand the real meaning in his direct instructions, which tend to be obscured by extensive arguments and interpretations in *'The Final Order'*.

In trying to disregard the repeated instructions of Srila Prabhupada and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to become a guru, the author of TFO has given a blanket interpretation that whenever this instruction is given it cannot refer to *diksa* guru but must only mean *siksa* guru. Trying to minimize the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is certainly a bold stance to take, so let us examine whether the evidence supports this stance. In his purports to Caitanya Charitamrta, Srila Prabhupada quotes his own spiritual master, who directly refutes the claim that the order to become guru cannot refer to *diksa* guru:

"Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura also states that although one is situated as a *brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vaisya*, *sudra*, *brahmacari*, *vanaprastha*, *grhastha* or *sannyasi*, if he is conversant in the science of Krsna he can become a spiritual master as *vartha-pradarsaka* guru, *diksa* guru or *siksa* guru. The spiritual master who first gives information about spiritual life is called the *vartha-pradarsaka* guru, the spiritual master who initiates according to the regulations of the shastras is called the *diksa* guru, and the spiritual master who gives instructions for elevation is called the *siksa* guru...

*kiba vipra, kiba nyasi, sudra kene naya  
yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei 'guru' haya*

The word guru is equally applicable to the *vartha-pradarsaka* guru, *siksa* guru and *diksa* guru. Unless we accept the principle enunciated by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, this Krsna consciousness movement cannot spread all over the world. According to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's intentions, *prthivite ache yata nagaradi-grama sarvatra pracara haibe mora nama*. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's cult must be preached all over the world."

Sri Caitanya Charitamrta 8.128p

1966

"That is a chance given, that you can become a *brahmana*, you can become a great devotee of Lord Krishna, and you can become the spiritual master of the world...If you, some of you at least understand this science and take up this science, you become future hope of the, this country or the world. That is my request to you, that you should take this chance and become a spiritual master for all the people."

New York, July 29, 1966



"If you want to understand the transcendental science, then you have to approach to a spiritual master." And who is spiritual master? ... One who is coming into that disciplic succession and by coming from that disciplic succession, he is firmly convinced in the Absolute, he is firmly conversant in the Absolute Truth, he is guru."

New York, August 12, 1966

"So there is no bar for anyone, that one cannot become the spiritual master. **Everyone can become spiritual master, provided he knows the science of Krsna. That is the only qualification.**"

New York, August 17, 1966

"These two qualifications. You have to find out that whether this man is coming from disciplic succession, *srotriyam*... Just like in the Bhagavad-gita it is said, *evam parampara-praptam*: "By this disciplic succession, this science of Bhagavad-gita was learned." So you have to approach the spiritual master who is coming down from that disciplic succession. Then he is bona fide."

San Francisco, March 3, 1967

## 1967

"Because in Indian society it is simply taken that the *brahmanas* and the *sannyasi* can be spiritual master. But Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, "No. Anyone can become spiritual master provided he's conversant with the science."

April 5-6, 1967, San Francisco

## 1968

"A person who is liberated *acharya* and guru cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and *acharya* by strictly following the disciplic succession."

New York, 26 April, 1968

"So Rupa Goswami says who can be a spiritual master. So he has given specifically this definition, that one who has got controls over the tongue, over the speech, over the mind, over the belly, and over the genitals, and over the anger. If anyone has control over these six things, then he can become spiritual master. *Prthivim sa sisyat*: 'He is allowed to make disciples all over the world.' Otherwise not."

Montreal, July 9, 1968

"The disciple, if he cannot understand the statement of the scriptures or any saintly person, he submits his doubts before the spiritual master and he clears it. In this way we have to make progress."

Montreal, July 9, 1968

## 1969

"Still, you see practically: he has got a spiritual master, and—Narada—and he's giving instruction. So this is necessary... Therefore we have to learn Krsna consciousness through the disciplic succession. Our, this *sampradaya*, the Gaudiya-*sampradaya*, is also in the same line—Narada, Vyasadeva. Narada is the disciple of Brahma. It is, therefore, called, this *sampradaya*... This party is called Brahma-*sampradaya*. *Brahma-madhva-gaudiya-sampradaya*. Originally from Brahma. Brahma instructed Narada. You'll find in the Bhagavata. Brahma is instructing Narada. Now you see Narada is instructing Vyasadeva. Similarly, Vyasadeva instructed Madhva Muni. Now, Madhva Muni, by disciplic succession, Madhavendra Puri. Now, Madhavendra Puri instructed Isvara Puri. Isvara Puri instructed Lord Caitanya. Lord Caitanya instructed the six Goswamis. The six Goswamis instructed Krsnadasa Kaviraja. Krsnadasa instructed Narottama dasa Thakura. Narottama dasa Thakura, Visvanatha Cakravarti. Visvanatha Cakravarti, Jagannath dasa Babaji. In this way, there is a clear line of disciplic succession."

New Vrindaban, June 11, 1969

"Regarding your question about the disciplic succession coming down from Arjuna, it is just like I have got my disciples, so in the future these many disciples may have many branches of disciplic succession."

Los Angeles, 25 January, 1969

"Narada Muni is our original Spiritual Master and he has dragged so many fallen souls towards Krishna, and we are also hoping to be dragged by Him through the disciplic succession. Otherwise, if we study our own qualifications, there is



none--rather I have got so many disqualifications."

Hawaii, 10 March, 1969

"Lord Caitanya says that "Every one of you become the spiritual master, every one of you. Why one, two? Every one of you." "Oh, spiritual master is very difficult job." No. No difficult job. Caitanya Maha... *Amara ajnaya*: Just try to carry out My order. That's all. Then you become spiritual master."

Columbus, May 9, 1969

I am also obliged to them because they are helping me in this missionary work. At the same time, I shall request them all to become spiritual master. Every one of you should be spiritual master next.

Hamburg, September 5, 1969

## 1970

From the life of Narada Muni it is distinct that **although He was a conditioned soul in His previous life, there was no impediment of His becoming the Spiritual Master. This law is applicable not only to the Spiritual Master, but to every living entity.**

Los Angeles, 21 June, 1970

"In spite of having all these qualities, if he is impersonalist and voidist, he cannot become spiritual master. *Avaisnavo gurur na syad vaisnavah svapaco guruh*: On the other hand, if a person is Vaisnava, devotee of the Lord, even if he is born in the family of *cancala*, less than the *sudra*, he can become the spiritual master." These are the injunctions of the sastra.

Surat, December 23, 1970

## 1971

"Everyone can, whoever is initiated, he is competent to make disciples. But as a matter of etiquette they do not do so in the presence of their spiritual master. This is the etiquette. Otherwise, they are competent. They can make disciples and spread... they are competent to make disciples."

Detroit, July 18, 1971

## 1972

"So far designation is concerned, the spiritual master authorizes every one of his disciple. But it is up to the disciple to carry out the order, able to carry out or not. It is not that spiritual master is partial, he designates one and rejects other. He may do that. If the other is not qualified, he can do that. But actually his intention is not like that. **He wants that each and every one of his disciple become as powerful as he is or more than that. That is his desire.** Just like father wants every son to be as qualified or more qualified than the father. But it is up to the student or to the son to raise himself to that standard."

San Diego, June 29, 1972

"If you are incapable of raising yourself to the standard of becoming spiritual master, that is not your spiritual master's fault, that is your fault. He wants, just like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said, *amara ajnaya guru hana*, By My order, every one of you become a guru."

San Diego, June 29, 1972

"Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's principle is anyone who knows the science of Krsna, he can become spiritual master. This is the principle."

Vrindavana, October 16, 1972

"One must approach. Sanatana Goswami's teaching us the Vaisnava principle that one should approach a proper spiritual master. So he's approaching Caitanya Mahaprabhu. So one may argue that "Where is Caitanya Mahaprabhu now? Where is Krsna now?" It doesn't matter. Krsna's words are there. Caitanya Mahaprabhu's words are there. Instructions are there. So if we follow the direction and instruction of Caitanya Mahaprabhu or Krsna **under the guidance of a superior, bona fide spiritual master**, then we associate with Krsna and Caitanya Mahaprabhu with **bona fide devotion.**"



Vrndavana, October 19, 1972

1973

"So how everyone can become a spiritual master? A spiritual master must have sufficient knowledge, so many other qualifications. No. Even without any qualifications, one can become a spiritual master. How? Now the process is, Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, *amara ajnaya*: "On My order." That is the crucial point. One does not become spiritual master by his own whims. That is not spiritual master. He must be ordered by superior authority. Then he's spiritual master. *Amara ajnaya*. Just like in our case. Our superior authority, our spiritual master, he ordered me that "You just try to preach this gospel, whatever you have learned from me, in English." So we have tried it. That's all. It is not that I am very much qualified. The only qualification is that I have tried to execute the order of superior authority. That's all. This is the secret of success."

London, August 3, 1973

"Our process is *evam parampara praptam imam rajarsayo viduh*. *Parampara*. What Krsna said, the disciplic succession will say the same thing. But they are speaking differently. So therefore we don't take them as bona fide. They are not bona fide."

Paris, August 13, 1973

"From a bona fide spiritual master you receive knowledge, because he will present as he has received from his spiritual master. He'll not adulterate or manufacture something. That is the bona fide spiritual master. And that is very easy. To become spiritual master is not very difficult thing. You'll have to become spiritual master. You, all my disciples, everyone should become spiritual master. It is not difficult. It is difficult when you manufacture something. But if you simply present whatever you have heard from your spiritual master, it is very easy."

London, August 22, 1973

"Don't try to become over spiritual master. Then you'll spoil. Remain always a servant of your spiritual master and present the thing as you have heard. You'll be spiritual master. This is secret. You should know it. Don't try to become over intelligent. That will spoil. *Evam parampara praptam imam rajarsayo viduh*."

London, August 22, 1973

"There are so many qualification. But one may not have all these qualifications. He may be rascal number one, but still, he can become spiritual master. How? *Amara ajnaya*. As Krsna says, as Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, if you follow, then you become spiritual master. One may be rascal number one from material estimation, but if he simply strictly follows whatever is said by Caitanya Mahaprabhu or His representative spiritual master, then he becomes a guru. So it is not very difficult. One may not think that "I am not qualified to become guru." No, you are qualified if you follow strictly the parampara system. Then you are qualified. That's all."

London, August 22, 1973

"This is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mission, that "I give you order. You, every one of you become a spiritual master." "Oh, I have no qualification. How can I become spiritual master? It requires high knowledge, Sanskrit understanding." "No, you don't require anything. Simply you speak *krsna-upadesa*." What is *krsna-upadesa*? Krsna says, *sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja*. You simply go door to door and say, "Please surrender to Krsna." Then you are spiritual master. I have done this. What I have done? I have gone to your country to say this thing, that "Here is Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You surrender; you become perfect." That is being done. So it is not very difficult to become spiritual master. Simply you have to become very serious and sincere to the service of Krsna."

Delhi, November 4, 1973

"You become a spiritual master under my order, under His order. Don't manufacture yourself. Under the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. That is called *parampara* system, one who is following in disciplic succession the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu."

Los Angeles, December 6, 1973

1974

"This is the magic. If you adulterate nonsensically like a rascal, then you cannot become a spiritual master. If you simply follow what Krsna has spoken, then you become spiritual master. Very simple thing. It doesn't require education. You can hear from your spiritual master what has Krsna said."



Bombay, April 4, 1974

"If God sees that you are sincere, He will give you a spiritual master who can give you protection. He will help you from within and without, without in the physical form of spiritual master, and within as the spiritual master within the heart."

Rome, May 23, 1974

"This is acharya. You behave yourself exactly as it is stated in the sastra, as it is ordered by Caitanya Mahaprabhu, as it is ordered by Krsna... *Apani acari jivere sikhaya*. And you teach all your disciples, who comes to you as your disciples, teach them. This is *acharya*.

So *acharya*, guru, representative, it is not difficult. Simply one has to become very, very sincere."

Vrindavana, August 15, 1974

## 1975

"*Evam parampara-praptam imam rajarsayo viduh*. So we have to follow the acharya. Then, when we are completely, cent per cent follower of acharya, then you can also act as acharya. This is the process. Don't become premature acharya. First of all follow the orders of acharya, and you become mature. Then it is better to become acharya. Because we are interested in preparing acharya, but the etiquette is, at least for the period the guru is present, one should not become acharya."

Mayapur, April 6, 1975

"So try to follow the path of acharya process. Then life will be successful. And to become acharya is not very difficult. First of all, to become very faithful servant of your acharya, follow strictly what he says. Try to please him and spread Krsna consciousness. That's all. It is not at all difficult."

Mayapur, April 6, 1975

"Every student is expected to become Acharya. Acharya means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his disciples..."

Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide Guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your Spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bona fide Spiritual Master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy."

New Delhi, 2 December, 1975

## 1976

"By My command you become a guru and save this land. This was also the mission of my Guru Maharaj and it is my mission. You will perfect your life if you make it also your mission."

New Delhi, 1 September, 1976

"You each be guru," he said. "As I have five thousand disciples or ten thousand, so you have ten thousand each. In this way, create branches and branches of the Caitanya tree."

Mayapur GBC meetings 1976

"The guru must come through the *parampara* system. Then he is bona fide. Otherwise he is a rascal. Must come through the parampara system, and in order to understand tad-vijnanam, transcendental science, you have to approach guru. You cannot say that "I can understand at home." No. That is not possible. That is the injunction of the all sastra."

Hyderabad, August 19, 1976

"Even though you see that he is materially born, his behavior is like other men. But because he says the same truth as it is spoken in the Vedas or by the Personality of Godhead, therefore he is guru. Because he does not make any change whimsically, therefore he is guru. That is the definition. It is very simple."



Hyderabad, August 19, 1976

1977

"By reading, you cannot understand. *Tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet*. That is also *vidhilin*: "In order to understand that science, he must go to guru."

January 8, 1977, Bombay

**Prabhupada:** Anyone Krsna conscious, he's the messiah. Every one. Why one? All of us. *Gaurangera bhakta-gane, jane jane sakti dhari, brahmanca tari saksi(?)*: "The devotee of Lord Caitanya, every one has so immense power that every one, they can deliver the whole universe." *Gaurangera bhakta-jane, jane jane sakti..., brahmanca tari...* That is Gauranga's men.

**Tamal Krsna:** Only you are that powerful, Srila Prabhupada. We're like...

**Prabhupada:** Why you are not? You are my disciples.

**Tamal Krsna:** We're like the bugs.

**Prabhupada:** "Like father, like son." You should be. *Gaurangera bhakta..., jane*. Everyone. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, *amara ajnaya guru hana tara' ei desa*. He asked everyone, "Just become guru." Follow His instruction. You become guru. *Amara ajnaya*. Don't manufacture ideas. *Amara ajnaya*. "What I say, you do. You become a guru." Where is the difficulty? "And what is Your *ajna*?" *Yare dekha tare kaha krsna-upadesa*. Bas. Everything is there in the Bhagavad-gita. You simply repeat. That's all. You become guru. To become a guru is not difficult job. Follow Caitanya Mahaprabhu and speak what Krsna has said. Bas. You become guru."

Bombay, April 15, 1977

**Prabhupada:** Yes. I shall choose some guru. I shall say, "Now you become acharya. You become authorized." I am waiting for that. You become all acharya. I retire completely. But the training must be complete.

**Tamal Krsna:** The process of purification must be there.

**Prabhupada:** Oh, yes, must be there. Caitanya Mahaprabhu wants that. *Amara ajnaya guru hana*. "You become guru." (laughs) But be qualified. Little thing, strictly follower...

Bombay, April 22, 1977

"When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it."

Vrndavana, May 28, 1977

"And Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, *amara ajnaya guru hana*. One can understand the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he can become guru. Or one who understands his guru's order, the same *parampara*, he can become guru. And therefore I shall select some of you."

Vrndavana, May 28, 1977



## 4. Prabhupada's teachings on succession

*"This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way."*

Lord Sri Krishna, the *Bhagavad-gita*, 4.2

*"One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master."*

Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.9.43p

Throughout the recorded works of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, both during his twelve years of preaching in the Western countries and in the years previous, he explains the ancient principle of parampara or disciplic succession, whereby the bona-fide spiritual master instructs his disciple in the science of God. Those disciples who become qualified then become spiritual masters themselves after the departure of their guru, thus continuing the unbroken transmission of the messages of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Srila Prabhupada not only explained this system in detail, but repeatedly requested his disciples to take up the role of initiating spiritual masters in his absence to push on the movement which he had started.

TFO claims that Srila Prabhupada actually wanted that all future devotees of ISKCON be initiated as disciple, and that there would be no more diksa gurus after him. However, a study of Srila Prabhupada's books, letters and lectures seems to clearly indicate that this is actually not the stated desire of His Divine Grace.

*"Anyone following the order of Lord Caitanya under the guidance of His bona fide representative can become a spiritual master and I wish that in my absence all my disciples become the bona fide spiritual master to spread Krsna Consciousness throughout the whole world."*

(SPL to Madhusudana, 2nd November, 1967)

Note the date on this letter - 1967. So, even from the early days of his movement, Srila Prabhupada expected that his disciples would become spiritual masters.

Note also the phrase used by Srila Prabhupada to designate when this would occur - "in my absence." This phrase is significant for two reasons. The first refers to after his departure from this world, which is what is expected in a standard disciplic succession - some of the disciples take their own disciples after their spiritual master has left this world. However, the other level of meaning in the phrase "in my absence" is very significant to the *ritvik* debate. The *ritviks* claim that no future *diksha* gurus are ever needed because Srila Prabhupada is always present in his books. That Srila Prabhupada is present through his books has never been in dispute. However, we see that Srila Prabhupada did also consider his physical presence to have some significant relevance in the issue of disciplic succession, and this aspect is mentioned in many of his other statements.

*"Every student is expected to become acharya. Acharya means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his disciples. I have given you sannyasa with the great hope that in my absence you will preach the cult throughout the world and thus become recognised by Krsna as the most sincere servant of the Lord."*

(SPL to Tusta Krsna Swami, 2nd December, 1975)



This quote comes from a much later time, only two years before Srila Prabhupada left the planet. However, this quote echoes the same sentiments from some of Srila Prabhupada's earlier quotes. In fact, this quote is quite a bit stronger in certain regards. First, note that Srila Prabhupada expects every student to become an *acharya*. This title is not used casually. Second, note that Srila Prabhupada says that the *acharya* teaches things to his disciples. So, the *acharya* is expected to have his own disciples, and Srila Prabhupada expected his disciples to become *acharyas*. The natural conclusion, therefore, is that Srila Prabhupada expected his disciples to one day take disciples of their own. Finally, note that Srila Prabhupada once again says "in my absence," which does, as explained above, place importance on the physical presence of the spiritual master. However, in that same letter, Srila Prabhupada makes even stronger statements:

"Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that **during the lifetime of your spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession.**"

(SPL to Tusta Krsna Swami, 2nd December, 1975)

This is a very clear statement from Srila Prabhupada showing that he expected his disciples to become bona fide gurus and accept their own disciples eventually. He once again makes reference to the physical presence of the spiritual master, and makes clear that the initiation of new disciples depends on the physical presence or absence of the initiator's spiritual master. In this statement, Srila Prabhupada makes clear that this process is how the disciplic succession continues.

Also note how in this and other letters, Srila Prabhupada clearly explains that a disciple should not initiate in the presence of his spiritual master. If Prabhupada refers to 'initiate' and 'become spiritual master' only in the sense of *siksa* instructions or becoming an officiating priest (as the *ritvik* proponents claim), why does he expressly forbid doing this on the one hand, and at the same time gives direct instructions to numerous disciples to act as both *siksa*-gurus and officiating priests to initiate disciples on his behalf? Clearly Srila Prabhupada is talking about something other than the officiating role which was already being performed by his senior disciples; he was talking about his disciples accepting their own disciples when he was no longer physically present on the planet. This is not surprising since his books and conversations are absolutely full of references to the parampara system and how this system, of surrendering to a living bona-fide spiritual master, is imperative to the proper understanding of Vedic knowledge.

This point is made clear in the following quote:

"This is called parampara system. Suppose I have heard something from my spiritual master, so I speak to you the same thing. So this is parampara system. You cannot imagine what my spiritual master said. Or even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. This is called *parampara* system. You cannot jump over to the superior guru, neglecting the next *acharya*, immediate next *acharya*."

Srila Prabhupada lecture December 8th, 1973

Here Srila Prabhupada specifically mentions the issue of surrendering to the current link in the chain of disciplic succession. He instructs his disciples that, "even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. This is called *parampara*". He clearly explains the principal of *parampara*, and even explicitly states that simply to read books is not enough (a corner stone of *ritvik*-theory), but rather the disciple must understand everything through his own spiritual master, and not attempt to independently understand the previous *acharyas*.

Prabhupada confirms this again in the following purport from *Sri Caitanya-Charitamrta*:

"One should not proudly think that one can understand the transcendental loving service of the Lord simply by reading books. One must become a servant of a Vaisnava. As Narottama dasa Thakura has confirmed, *chadiya vaisnava-seva nistara peyechhe keba*: one cannot be in a transcendental position unless one very faithfully serves a pure Vaisnava. One must accept a Vaisnava guru (*adau gurv-asrayam*), and then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Krsna is. That is called the *parampara* system."

C.C. A 7.54p



And again in answering a question from an Indian lady at his lecture:

**Indian lady:** How does one contact the spiritual master? Through a book can you contact the spiritual master?

**Prabhupada:** No, you have to associate.

**Syamasundara:** "Can you associate through a book?" she asked.

**Prabhupada:** Yes, through books, and also personal. Because when you make a spiritual master you have got personal touch. Not that in air you make a spiritual master. You make a spiritual master concrete. So as soon as you make a spiritual master, you should be inquisitive.

London, September 23, 1969

In the section of TFO entitled 'Other Related Objections', the author attempts to address the very pertinent objection that if there is no more bona-fide *diksa* initiations then the *parampara* will be stopped (at least within ISKCON). He starts his explanation by making the following statement:

TFO: "the disciplic succession is eternal, there is no question of it stopping."

Firstly, this claim is directly denied by Lord Krishna Himself:

"This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. **But in course of time the succession was broken**, and therefore the science as it is appears to be lost." (Bhagavad-gita 4.2)

And Srila Prabhupada confirms in the purport:

"Five thousand years ago it was detected by the Lord Himself that the disciplic succession was broken, and therefore He declared that the purpose of the Gita appeared to be lost."

Mr. Desai then goes on to argue that, "Compared with eternity 9,500 years is just a blip in cosmic time." and that previous *acharyas* have remained current in the disciplic succession for millions of years, quoting the example of Vyasadeva. **However, this example actually supports the standard understanding of *parampara*, i.e. that each disciple must approach and take *diksa* from a living link in the *parampara* system;** it is described that Madhvacharya went to the Himalayas where he met Vyasadeva face to face and took initiation from him. It certainly doesn't support the idea that successive generations of devotees should take *diksa* from a previous *acharya* who is no longer physically present.

The author then goes on to selectively quote a letter from Srila Prabhupada in 1968. In it he highlights the lines mentioning how Krishna only mentions three names in the *parampara* which extended for millions of years and how Prabhupada instructs that we have to follow the prominent *acharya* of our particular *sampradaya*.

Taken in its entirety, however, the letter clearly explains the traditional understanding:

"Regarding *parampara* system: there is nothing to wonder for big gaps. Just like we belong to the Brahma *Sampradaya*, so we accept it from Krishna to Brahma, Brahma to Narada, Narada to Vyasadeva, Vyasadeva to Madhva, and between Vyasadeva and Madhva there is a big gap. But it is sometimes said that **Vyasadeva is still living, and Madhva was fortunate enough to meet him directly.** In a similar way, we find in the *Bhagavad-gita* that the Gita was taught to the Sungod, some millions of years ago, but Krishna has mentioned only three names in this *parampara* system--namely, Vivasvan, Manu, and Iksvaku; and so these gaps do not hamper from understanding the *parampara* system. We have to pick up the prominent *acharyas*, and follow from him. **There are many branches also from the *parampara* system, and it is not possible to record all the branches and sub-branches in the disciplic succession.** We have to pick up from the authority of the *acharya* in whatever *sampradaya* we belong to."

Prabhupada clearly states that Madhva was fortunate to meet Vyasadeva directly. Also, the reason for the letter is revealed on a full reading. Srila Prabhupada explains: "There are many branches also from the *parampara* system, and it is not possible to record all the branches and sub-branches in the disciplic succession." Prabhupada is answering the question of whether the *parampara* consists of only the few *acharyas* which are listed. Rather than support Mr. Desai's point, however, Srila Prabhupada gives the correct understanding i.e. that even though only certain *acharyas* are listed, still there are "branches and sub-branches in the disciplic succession", so many, in fact, that "it is not possible to list record all." Thus rather than supporting the premise of TFO that it is normal for a *parampara* to continue for many years without living links



under the one previous *acharya*, Prabhupada's letter actually confirms exactly the opposite, that there are branches and branches of the *parampara* which continue, but for the sake of brevity, in a list of the disciplic succession, only the prominent *acharyas* are listed.

In fact, even great *acharyas* (and even Krishna Himself) did accept a living guru, just to show the example to the people in general:

"One has to submit. In order to know the solution of life, we have to submit to the proper spiritual master. That is essential. *Tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet*. This is Vedic injunction. This *abhigacchet*, this word is used when it is meant "must." There is no escape. We have seen big, big personalities... Just like Caitanya Mahaprabhu; He is Krsna Himself, but He accepted Isvara Puri as His guru. Krsna, He also accepted His guru as Sandipani Muni. Lord Ramacandra, He accepted His guru as VasisTha. So it is (not) necessary, Krsna or Rama. They are Supreme Personality of Godhead. They are the supreme instructor, full of knowledge, everything. *Aisvaryasya samagrasya viryasya*. There is nothing short, but still, to show us example, They accepted guru. That is essential"

Washington, D.C., July 5, 1976

The principle is repeated again:

As already stated, Brahma is the original spiritual master for the universe, and since he was initiated by the Lord Himself, the message of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is coming down by disciplic succession, and in order to receive the real message of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* one should approach the current link, or spiritual master, in the chain of disciplic succession. After being initiated by the proper spiritual master in that chain of succession, one should engage himself in the discharge of *tapasya* in the execution of devotional service.

(Srimad Bhagavatam, 2.9.7p)

And again:

"Krsna is the first spiritual master, and when we become more interested, then we have to go to a physical spiritual master. That is enjoined in the next verse. *Tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya, upadeksyanti te jnanam jnaninas tattva- darsinah*. Now, Krsna advises that "If you want to know that transcendental science, then you just try to approach somebody." *Pranipatena. Pranipatena, pariprasnena* and *sevaya*. What is *pranipata*? *Pranipata* means surrender. Surrender. You must select a person where you can surrender yourself because nobody likes to surrender to anyone.

(Srla Prabhupada lecture, August 14th 1966)

Prabhupada here brings up another point along the way, namely the process of surrender. **In the traditional *parampara* system, the disciple actually surrenders to a particular person**, giving up his independence and accepting the guru's instructions as his life and soul. In the system proposed by TFO, with its hundreds of *siksa* gurus, there is no ultimate authority for each devotees spiritual life. The 'disciple' can conveniently follow whichever instruction he likes best. **This is completely antithetical to real surrender to a living guru.** *Ritvik* proponents argue that this system of *siksa* was being practiced successfully during Srla Prabhupada's presence also. However, each disciple knew that the ultimate authority was Srla Prabhupada himself, and if an issue... could not be decided by the different levels of authority then it would ultimately go to Prabhupada for his final adjudication.

Further, had he wanted the entire system to end with him as the final guru, he would not have needed to instruct his own disciples on how to initiate their own disciples, as he also did at other times:

"...You each become guru," he said. "As I have five thousand disciples or ten thousand, so you have ten thousand each. In this way, create branches and branches of the Chaitanya tree. But you have to be spiritually strong. This means chanting your rounds and following the four rules. It is not an artificial show. It is not a material thing. Chant and follow the four rules and pray to Krsna in helplessness."

(SP Lilamrta VI, page 167)



This statement also has several important points. The first is when Pabhupada tells his disciples to become gurus and have ten thousand disciples each. Had he just expected his disciples to keep endlessly initiating on his behalf, the statement he made would have been inappropriate. The statement only makes sense if the disciples are to take their own disciples eventually. The second important point is that he expects the tree (*sampradaya*) to have "branches and branches". If all future disciples were to become his and his only, then there would be no branches in the tree, since all the disciples would be connected directly to Srila Prabhupada's link in the tree.

'One who is doing the humble service of preaching work, Krsna consciousness, nobody is dearer than him to Me.' So if you want to become recognized by Krsna very quickly, you take up this process of becoming spiritual master, present the *Bhagavad-gita* As It Is, your life is perfect. Thank you very much."

(Vyasa-Puja Address, London, 22nd August, 1973)

TFO attempts to disregard Prabhupada's direct letters to disciples to become spiritual masters by making the spurious claim that this was only to encourage overly ambitious disciples to continue in their service. The above quote and others show Prabhupada giving the same instruction to a large gathering of disciples. There is no question that his desire was secret or hidden, or that he was simply giving the instruction to encourage his disciples. As for the claim that the disciples weren't qualified, Srila Prabhupada often gives the same understanding:

"So it is not very difficult. One may not think that, 'I am not qualified to become guru.' No! You are qualified! If you follow strictly the *parampara* system, then you are qualified. That's all. *Amara ajnaya* guru. And what is the difficulty? Caitanya Mahaprabhu says don't feel any difficulty. Because as spiritual master what you have to do? *Yare dekha, tare kaha 'krsna'-upadesa*. Whomever you meet you simply speak to him the instruction which Krsna gives."

(Vyasa-Puja Address, London, 22nd August, 1973)

Srila Prabhupada repeats this instruction so many times that it is very hard to pass it off lightly, without obviously disregarding his explicit instructions.

Throughout TFO the author argues that Srila Prabhupada's disciples are not qualified to become guru, giving the explanation that one must be a *mahabhagavata* or *uttama adhikari* to become spiritual master. In his purport to *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Srila Prabhupada gives a different explanation.

"The first-class devotee does not at all see anyone who is not in the service of the Lord, but the second class devotee makes distinctions between devotees and nondevotees. The second-class devotees are therefore meant for preaching work, and as referred to in the above verse, they must loudly preach the glories of the Lord. The second-class devotee accepts disciples from the section of third-class devotees or nondevotees. Sometimes the first-class devotee also comes down to the category of the second-class devotee for preaching work."

Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.3.21p

Confirming that not only can the madhyama-adhikaris accept disciples, but that this is their general function, and the first class devotee only "sometimes" comes to the level of second class for preaching purposes. The author also argues that the spiritual master must be a liberated soul, however Prabhupada many times defined what it means to be liberated, and interestingly enough it is the same definition he gives many times for the qualification to become a guru i.e. one must be strictly following all the instructions of his spiritual master.

"A person who is liberated *acharya* and guru cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and *acharya* by strictly following the disciplic succession."

New York, 26 April, 1968

"When his senses are completely engaged in the service of Hrsikesa—Hrsikesa is another name of Krsna—that is called bhakti. Bhakti means the activities of liberated life. One may understand or not understand; if he is actually engaged in Krsna's service, under the direction of spiritual master, he is liberated. But if he voluntarily accepts again maya's service, then he is become conditioned. This is the secret."

Srila Prabhupada philosophy discussions with Hayagriva Das

"Try to understand this point. Our system, *parampara* system, is that I am just like disciple of Bhaktisiddhanta



Sarasvati. I don't say that I am liberated. I am conditioned. But because I am following the instruction of Bhaktisiddhanta, I'm liberated. This is the distinction between conditioned and liberated."

January 4, 1977, Bombay

As always, Srila Prabhupada was strictly following *sastra* and the previous *acharyas* in stating that if his disciples strictly followed the *parampara* system and presented the knowledge of Krishna from the *sastras*, they would become bona-fide spiritual masters, as evidenced from the founder of the sankirtana movement Himself:

*kiba vipra, kiba nyasi, sudra kene naya yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei 'guru' haya*

"Whether one is a *brahmana*, a *sannyasi* or a *sudra*--regardless of what he is--he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Krsna."

(Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, C.C. Madhya 8:128)

As already discussed in part 1, in this verse Srila Prabhupada deals a fatal blow to another pillar of *ritvik*-theory: namely that when verses such as the one above refer to 'guru' they are simply meaning '*siksa*' or '*vartma-pradasaka*' gurus, but not '*diksa*' gurus. The *ritvik* proponents try to discard such verses, inferring that they are not important. Srila Prabhupada, however, clearly thinks different:

"This verse is very important to the Krsna consciousness movement. ... Actually the *brahmana* is supposed to be the spiritual master of all other *varnas* or sects, but as far as Krsna consciousness is concerned, everyone is capable of becoming a spiritual master because knowledge in Krsna consciousness is on the platform of the spirit soul. To spread Krsna consciousness, one need only be cognizant of the science of the spirit soul. It does not matter whether one is a *brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vaisya*, *sudra*, *sannyasi*, *grhastha* or whatever. If one simply understands this science, he can become a spiritual master... Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura also states that although one is situated as a *brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vaisya*, *sudra*, *brahmacari*, *vanaprastha*, *grhastha* or *sannyasi*, if he is conversant in the science of Krsna he can become a spiritual master as *vartma-pradarsaka-guru*, *diksa-guru* or *siksa-guru*. One who first gives information about spiritual life is called the *vartma-pradarsaka-guru* or spiritual master. The spiritual master who initiates according to the regulations of the *sastras* is called *diksa-guru*, and the spiritual master who gives instructions for elevation is called *siksa-guru*... Sometimes a caste guru says that *ye krsna-tattva-vetta, sei guru haya* means that one who is not a *brahmana* may become a *siksa-guru* or a *vartma-pradarsaka-guru* but not an initiator guru. According to such caste gurus, birth and family ties are considered foremost. However, the hereditary consideration is not acceptable to Vaisnavas. The word guru is equally applicable to the *vartma-pradarsaka-guru*, *siksa-guru* and *diksa-guru*. Unless we accept the principle enunciated by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, this Krsna consciousness movement cannot spread all over the world."

Srila Prabhupada, C.C. M 8.128 p

Of course, the *ritvik*-theorist will try to discard these verses as being "just to encourage the devotees" etc. and will point to the falldown of ISKCON gurus as evidence that this is not correct. They try to use 'reverse-logic' to prove that because a number of ISKCON gurus have fallen down it means that Srila Prabhupada didn't want his disciples to become gurus. But if we accept this line of reasoning we could list so many instructions that devotees have trouble following. So many devotees have been unable to follow the four regulative principles but that doesn't mean that Srila Prabhupada didn't issue the instruction to his disciples to follow. Srila Prabhupada wants that we follow nicely, but if we can't follow it doesn't change his desire that we do. He explains this in the following quote:

"If you are incapable of raising yourself to the standard of becoming spiritual master, that is not your spiritual master's fault, that is your fault. He wants, just like Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, *amara ajnaya guru hana*, by My order, every one of you become a guru. If one cannot carry out the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, then how he can become a guru? The first qualification is that he must be able to carry out the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Then he becomes guru. So that carrying out the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu depends on one's personal capacity. *Amara ajnaya guru hana*."

June 21, 1972, Los Angeles



Also note how Prabhupada makes the point that "carrying out the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu depends on one's own capacity". In other words, become a guru, but if you cannot become *diksa* guru become *siksa* guru or *vartma-pradasaka* guru, but somehow tell people about Kṛṣṇa. The understanding that TFO puts forward is a blanket one; "because most devotees aren't qualified to become *diksa* gurus it means that Lord Caitanya's and Srila Prabhupada's order to become guru couldn't refer to this. However, the correct understanding, as given by Prabhupada above, is that the order to become spiritual master is there for every disciple, but the application of what kind of guru one can become will depend on his qualification.

In his personal letters, Srila Prabhupada confirmed that he wanted his disciples to become qualified in the science of Krishna Consciousness and then become spiritual masters, to "increase the number of generations":

"I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975 all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the number of generations. That is my program."

(Srila Prabhupada letter to Hamsadutta, 3rd December, 1968)

In addition to the clear instruction that all of Srila Prabhupada's disciples can qualify for the title, note the use of the word generations with respect to initiation. Prabhupada is saying that **throughout the generations devotees should become qualified to accept the title of Bhaktivedanta, and that those who did would also be qualified to initiate disciples.** The same plans were expressed in a letter to Kirtanananda:

"By 1975, all of those who have passed all of the above examinations will be specifically empowered to initiate and increase the number of the Kṛṣṇa Conscious population."

Srila Prabhupada letter to Kirtanananda, 12th January, 1968

So we can see that Srila Prabhupada sent letters to his disciples about his desire for future generations of spiritual masters, and we've shown that Srila Prabhupada expressed those same desires in public. In addition, Srila Prabhupada repeatedly made statements to reassure his disciples that they are capable of becoming spiritual masters if they become qualified and strictly present what has been handed down through the *parampara*. Again we see the same idea regarding generations of disciples in an early letter to Kirtanananda:

"Regarding your question about the disciplic succession coming down from Arjuna, it is just like I have got my disciples, so in the future these many disciples may have many branches of disciplic succession. So in one line of disciples we may not see another name coming from a different line. But this does not mean that person whose name does not appear was not in the disciplic succession."

Srila Prabhupada letter to Kirtanananda, 25th January, 1969

The first part of the quote is especially important, since Srila Prabhupada makes clear that his disciples will form branches of the disciplic succession, which would not be possible under the *ritvik* theory.

The following letter from 1972 illustrates another deficiency in the theory of *ritvik* initiations from Srila Prabhupada after his departure. Note how Srila Prabhupada gives instructions to his representative Sri Govinda Das, and then asks him to instruct them not to commit any sinful activities otherwise he will have to suffer as their spiritual master.

My dear Sri Govinda,

Please accept my blessings. Enclosed please find three sacred threads duly chanted by me, along with three copies of *gayatri* mantra. Now hold the fire *yajna* and give *gayatri* mantra to Vipina Purandhara, Sundhararupa and Jaya das. You may teach them to count on the finger divisions and play the tape of me reciting *gayatri* mantra into their right ear. **Instruct them fully in the qualifications for becoming *brahmana*, and henceforth they must be very, very careful**



not to commit any sinful acts or otherwise I shall have to suffer as their spiritual master. The ceremony should be held in the company of devotees only.  
 Hoping this meets you in good health.  
 Your ever well-wisher,  
 A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Srila Prabhupada is explaining that even though Sri Govinda is performing the ceremony, still it is Srila Prabhupada, their spiritual master, who will suffer if they commit sinful activity. Prabhupada makes the same point again in the next letter, especially in regard to *Gayatri* mantras.

"You get the seed of devotion, and the Hare Krishna mantra through the mercy of the spiritual master and Krishna. Similarly, upon your surrender, the spiritual master and Krishna take responsibility for your sins. So if you commit sin again, the spiritual master becomes responsible for your sinful reaction. Therefore, it is the disciple's duty not to commit sin again. Not only *Gayatri* mantra, but all mantras cleanse one from sinful reactions, but we should not chant these mantras and then commit sin again."

Los Angeles, 22 August, 1972

The question then is this; if Srila Prabhupada is not personally present to accept responsibility for his disciples, then who accepts the reactions of the disciples sinful activities. It couldn't be the *ritvik* priest because he is simply officiating at the ceremony, and if Prabhupada accepts the reaction then how is it certain that he actually will if he is not here to personally accept the disciple? The *ritvik*-theory proponents will argue that Srila Prabhupada had already set in place a system where devotees could be initiated as his disciples without his prior knowledge (in July of 1977 when Srila Prabhupada was very sick in Vrindavana) but in this case Prabhupada had expressly delegated his authority to those 11 disciples to initiate on his behalf.

Prior to this, there were many devotees who were performing initiation ceremonies on Prabhupada's behalf. They would write to Prabhupada recommending a devotee and then Prabhupada would write back to say if he accepted them, give them a spiritual name and the representative would then perform the ceremony. But in 1977, due to the backlog of devotees asking for initiation, Prabhupada gave special authority for 11 of his most senior and trusted devotees to act as 'officiating *acharyas*', who could give initiations on his behalf without his prior knowledge. So he specifically gave that power of attorney to those eleven people, and therefore because they followed his direct order to initiate, they were acting under his authority and therefore the initiations were bona-fide. However, he never gave this authority to any other devotees in the movement, therefore if anyone else tries to initiate devotees on Prabhupada's behalf they have no authority from Prabhupada to do that, and therefore the initiations they perform are meaningless.

Of course we can say that Srila Prabhupada is all merciful and so would certainly accept, but this is not supported by scriptures, and it is tending towards the Christian idea that Jesus will suffer for all one's sins for all time. The question of who accepts responsibility for the sinful reactions of the disciple is one of the unanswered questions from the *ritvik* theorists.

Prabhupada has stressed so many times that he wanted his disciples to become spiritual masters that it is actually very amazing how the *ritvik* theorists can interpret things in such a way that they deny the desire of His Divine Grace. In his Vyasa-Puja address of 1973, Srila Prabhupada repeatedly requests his disciples to become spiritual masters and continue his movement.

"...I am very much hopeful that my disciples who are now participating today, even if I die, my movement will not stop. I am very much hopeful, yes. All these nice boys and girls who have taken so seriously... You will have to become spiritual master... you... all my disciples..."

Vyasa-Puja address, London, 22nd August, 1973

He confirms this again in the following conversation with guests in Detroit.

*Mohsin Hassan*: Yeah, the tenth. After you, is it any decision has been made who will take over?  
*Prabhupada*: Yes. All of them will take over. These students, who are initiated from me, all of them will act as I am doing. Just like I have got many Godbrothers, they are all acting. Similarly, all these disciples which I am making, initiating, they are being trained to become future spiritual masters.



*Mohsin Hassan:* How many swamis do you initiated, American? I'm speaking just on...

*Prabhupada:* About ten.

*Mohsin Hassan:* You have ten swamis. And outside of swamis, what's the lower...

*Prabhupada:* Now, they're competent. They can, not only the swamis, even the grhasthas, they are called dasa adbhikari, and brahmacaris, everyone can, whoever is initiated, he is competent to make disciples. But as a matter of etiquette they do not do so in the presence of their spiritual master. This is the etiquette. Otherwise, they are competent. They can make disciples and spread"

Conversation Detroit July 18, 1971

The first segment is very interesting. In it Srila Prabhupada clearly says that his disciples "will act as he is doing", just as he has many godbrothers who are acting as guru, similarly his disciples will act as guru and have godbrothers who are also spiritual masters.

In short, the evidence is overwhelming. Srila Prabhupada clearly wanted that his disciples take on the role of initiating spiritual masters in his absence, and the continual repetition of direct requests and instructions to do this over more than a decade is a historical fact.

## 5. Comparison of instructions on parampara and ritvik

We conducted a search of the Folio program containing Prabhupada's collected writings, letters and lectures, to make an impartial comparison of his explanations of ritvik and initiation by proxy, with his explanations of disciplic succession and the parampara system.

### 1. Ritvik

The word *ritvik* appears 11 times in the teachings of Srila Prabhupada, 3 of these being in a conversation of May 28, 1977, where Tamal Krishna Maharaja introduces the term to the discussion. Of the other 8 times, (all from the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*), where Prabhupada translates the word as meaning "priests conducting the sacrificial ceremony" or just "priests", 3 of these have no purport at all. In fact the only time throughout the whole Folio where Prabhupada mentions the term '*ritvik*' in his purports (7.3.30), he simply states that this refers to the four kinds of priests who perform Vedic ceremonies.

There is not one single example in any of Prabhupada's books where he describes a system of successive generations of disciples all taking initiation by proxy from the one departed guru.

This point alone should inspire very grave doubts in the minds of sincere followers of Srila Prabhupada that he ever wanted such a system.

### 2. Parampara

The word *parampara* appears 714 times in Prabhupada's teachings, (also the term 'disciplic succession' appears 875 times) and he gives voluminous explanations on numerous occasions. This starts even in the preface to his *Bhagavad-gita* translation, where Srila Prabhupada states that, "This absolute position of Krishna is difficult to understand for any person who is not a devotee of Krishna in the system of *parampara* (disciplic succession)." He further elaborates on the term in his introduction and then lists the whole *parampara* going back to Lord Krishna, citing it as his authorization for presenting *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*.

In fact, throughout his writings, the prodigious descriptions of the system of disciplic succession, which Srila Prabhupada continually expounds upon, amounts to overwhelming evidence of his strict adherence to this time-honored system. He consistently describes, again and again throughout his teachings, the importance of the ancient system of parampara, where the bona-fide guru instructs his qualified disciple, who then goes on to be the next bona-fide guru in the chain of disciplic succession.



Prabhupada many times stated that everything is in his books (ritvik-theory supporters often cite this as a reason not to accept a living guru), and the faithful followers of Srila Prabhupada accept his statements that his books will be the law books for the next ten thousand years. Certainly, all instructions needed to become self-realized are in Prabhupada's books (including the necessity of accepting a living bona-fide guru). It seems everything is there except the system of ritvik initiations over succession generations. There is no question, it is simply not there- it doesn't exist anywhere in Prabhupada's teachings.

In conclusion, it is very hard for those who knew Prabhupada and his consistency of teaching, or for that matter anyone who has made a thorough study of his books, to accept that Srila Prabhupada intended his followers to completely overturn all of his voluminous teachings, and those of his predecessor Acharyas, on the strength of one conversation, and then introduce a system of proxy-initiations over successive generations of disciples, which is found nowhere either in his teachings, those of his previous Acharyas or the scriptures.

*"Sampradaya-vihina ye mantras te nisphala matah. The knowledge of the Supreme received from such a sampradaya, or disciplic succession, can give one enlightenment. If one does not take to the path of disciplic succession, it is not possible for one to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead."*  
Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.7.17p

*Evam parampara-praptam imam ra. As soon as the parampara is lost, sa kalena yoga nasto parantapa. Immediately finished. The spiritual potency finished.*

Srila Prabhupada lecture, February 27th, 1977



## 6. The Confirmation of May 28, 1977

"He is grand-disciple... He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it"

Srila Prabhupada, May 28th, 1977

In May of 1977, foreseeing his imminent departure from the world, *Srila Prabhupada* requested his GBC disciples to come to him with any questions they had, specifically about what would happen after his departure. After meetings on May 27th and 28th, the GBC resolved that a list of 5 questions, relating to the replacement of GBC members, initiations in the absence of *Srila Prabhupada* and publications by the BBT, would be taken to *Srila Prabhupada* by a committee of 5 GBC representatives. The questions were:

- 1) How long should GBC members remain in office?
- 2) How can GBC members who leave be replaced?
- 3) In the absence of *Srila Prabhupada* what is the procedure for first, second and *sannyasa* initiations?
- 4) What is the relationship of the person who gives this initiation to the person he gives it to?
- 5) Is there any provision for publication of other translations of "Vaishnava scriptures by the BBT, after the disappearance of *Srila Prabhupada*?

Even though *Srila Prabhupada's* books and written instructions were replete with orders for his disciples to take the responsibility of becoming spiritual masters, the GBC did not want to leave any doubt that this was the intended desire of *Srila Prabhupada*.

*Srila Prabhupada* mentioned many times in his writings and his books, how the disciples of *Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur* did not strictly follow his orders after his departure, and therefore failed to successfully continue the dynamic preaching mission that he established. Aware of this, and their grave responsibility, the members of the GBC wanted final confirmation from His Divine Grace on the running of the society in his physical absence.

On May 28th, the GBC delegation approached *Srila Prabhupada* with their questions, as he had instructed. The following is an excerpt from that conversation.

*Satsvarupa*: But then, in the event that some present GBC member leaves, either leaves...

*Prabhupada*: Another should be elected.

*Satsvarupa*: By the votes of the present GBC. Then our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you're no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiation would be conducted.

*Prabhupada*: Yes. I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up, I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating *acharyas*.

*Tamal Krsna*: Is that called *ritvik-acharya*?

*Prabhupada*: *Ritvik*, yes.

*Satsvarupa*: Then what is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and the...

*Prabhupada*: He's guru. He's guru.

*Satsvarupa*: But he does it on your behalf.

*Prabhupada*: Yes. That is formality. Because in my presence one should not become guru, so on my behalf, on my order... *Amara ajnaya guru hana*. Be actually guru, but by my order.

*Satsvarupa*: So they may also be considered your disciples.

*Prabhupada*: Yes, they are disciples. Why consider? Who?

*Tamal Krsna*: No, he's asking that these *ritvik-acharyas*, they're officiating, giving diksa. Their... The people who they give diksa to, whose disciple are they?

*Prabhupada*: They're his disciple.

*Tamal Krsna*: They're his disciple.

*Prabhupada*: Who is initiating. He is grand-disciple.

*Satsvarupa*: Yes.

*Tamal Krsna*: That's clear.



**Satsvarupa:** Then we have a question concer...

**Prabhupada:** When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it.

Then after some talk about BBT matters, Srila Prabhupada concludes his comments on initiation by saying:

**Prabhupada:** And Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, *amara ajnaya guru hana*. One can understand the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he can become guru. Or one who understands his guru's order, the same *parampara*, he can become guru. And therefore I shall select some of you."

Here Srila Prabhupada clearly answers questions 3 and 4 above, which the GBC body had put to him. He says that he will nominate certain persons to act as officiating-*acharyas*, and that they will act as gurus, but that as a "formality", they will do so on behalf of Srila Prabhupada in his presence, because it is Vaishnava etiquette that one does not accept disciples in the presence of one's own spiritual master. Then when asked again to clarify whose disciple would the initiated devotee be, Srila Prabhupada states, "they're his disciple" and stating the same thing again, "he is grand-disciple".

At this point both Satsvarupa Maharaja and Tamal Krishna Maharaja both understood Prabhupada's intention, stating, "Yes" and "That's clear". However, just to clarify the point even further, and to leave no doubt in the minds of the GBC, Srila Prabhupada ignores the attempt to move on to the next question, and goes on to state, "When I order, 'You become guru,' he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it."

So here Srila Prabhupada confirms the exact same thing that he has been explaining in his lectures, writings and letters for the last 12 years without exception, to a select committee of his most senior and trusted disciples, who had been summoned by him, specifically to clarify how the society would be run in his physical absence. The recorded GBC minutes of the conversation confirm what everyone present understood. On the next page of the GBC minute book after the 5 questions were recorded, the following minutes record the answers to the questions posed by the GBC committee to Srila Prabhupada:

- 1) GBC members shall remain permanently. If a GBC member leaves, the GBC can appoint new GBC members.
- 2) **Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future, even after his disappearance. The disciples they accept shall be their disciples and Srila Prabhupada will be their grand spiritual master.**
- 3) New translations of Vedic works can be published in the future, even after Srila Prabhupada's departure, but they can only be done by one who is very expert. At present, Srila Prabhupada acknowledged, there are very few such men.

Once again, if we simply accept Prabhupada's instructions, without interpretation, it is very clear what he really wanted.

Note: For more detailed discussions on this conversation, and claims attempting to question its validity, see Appendices 1 and 3.



## 7. The Letter of July 9th, 1977

The subject of this letter is used in TFO as the irrefutable 'final order', which attempts to prove the case of the *riivik* philosophy. The letter was a response to a conversation of July 7th, where Tamal Krishna Maharaja brings to Srila Prabhupada's attention the dilemma of what to do about all the devotees who wanted to take initiation but had been told to wait due to Prabhupada's sickness. Although this conversation is a follow-on from the one of May 28th in the fact that Prabhupada actually names those devotees who would act as 'officiating *acharyas*', the reason behind the conversation is significantly different. The May 28 conversation deals specifically with the question of what would happen after Srila Prabhupada's departure, and he answers unequivocally that his disciples would accept disciples of their own. In contrast, **this conversation, from the very beginning, deals with the question of what to do about the backlog of new initiation candidates:**

**Tamal Krsna:** Srila Prabhupada? We're receiving a number of letters now, and these are people who want to get initiated. So up until now, since your becoming ill, we asked them to wait.

**Prabhupada:** The local, mean, senior sannyasis can do that.

**Tamal Krsna:** That's what we were doing... I mean, formerly we were... The local GBC, sannyasis, were chanting on their beads, and they were writing to Your Divine Grace, and you were giving a spiritual name. So should that process be resumed, or should we...? I mean one thing is that it's said that the spiritual master takes on the... You know, he takes on the... He has to cleanse the disciple by... So we don't want that you should have to... Your health is not so good, so that should not be... That's why we've been asking everybody to wait. I just want to know if we should continue to wait some more time.

**Prabhupada:** No, the senior sannyasis...

**Tamal Krsna:** So they should continue to...

**Prabhupada:** You can give me a list of sannyasis. I will mark who will...

**Tamal Krsna:** Okay...

**Prabhupada:** And... Five, six men, you divide who is nearest.

**Tamal Krsna:** Who is nearest. So persons wouldn't have to write to Your Divine Grace. They could write directly to that person?

**Prabhupada:** Hm.

**Tamal Krsna:** Actually they are initiating the person on Your Divine Grace's behalf. Those persons who are initiated are still your...

**Prabhupada:** Second initiation we shall think over, second initiation.

**Tamal Krsna:** This is for first initiation, okay. And for second initiation, for the time being they should...

**Prabhupada:** No, they have to wait. Second initiation, that should be given...

**Tamal Krsna:** Should... Some devotees are writing you now for second initiation, and I'm writing them to wait a while because you're not well. So can I continue to tell them that?

**Prabhupada:** They can do second initiation.

**Tamal Krsna:** By writing you.

**Prabhupada:** No. These men.

**Tamal Krsna:** These men, they can also do second initiation. So there's no need for devotees to write to you for first and second initiation. They can write to the man nearest them. But all these persons are still your disciples. Anybody who gives initiation is doing so on your behalf.

**Prabhupada:** Yes.

**Tamal Krsna:** You know that book I'm maintaining of all of your disciples' names? Should I continue that?

**Prabhupada:** Hm.

**Tamal Krsna:** So if someone gives initiation, like Harikesa Maharaja, he should send the person's name to us here and I'll enter it in the book. Okay. Is there someone else in India that you want to do this?

**Prabhupada:** India, I am here. We shall see. In India, Jayapataka...

The reason for this conversation, as stated above, is that there was a backlog of hundreds of devotees who wanted to take initiation from Srila Prabhupada. However, the initiations had been stopped, as Tamal Krishna Maharaja explains, because



the devotees close to Prabhupada were concerned about Prabhupada having to accept the karma of his disciples in his weakened condition.

The practice of having his disciples perform initiations on his behalf had been instituted by Prabhupada since the early days of the movement. He accepted this as a necessary step to spread Krishna Consciousness worldwide. The only difference now was that devotees could write directly to any of the senior disciples named by Srila Prabhupada, and he would initiate them, give them a spiritual name and send the record of initiation to Prabhupada in Vrindavana.

There are also two very clear evidences in the conversation that Srila Prabhupada and Tamal Krishna Maharaja were talking specifically about that time, i.e. when Prabhupada was present there in Vrindavana, and not for ever after. The first is where Tamal Krishna Maharaja states, "So if someone gives initiation, like Harikesa Maharaja, he should send the person's name to us here and I'll enter it in the book." This quite clearly confirms the context of the conversation, which had been set at the beginning; it was regarding the question of initiations while Srila Prabhupada was sick in Vrindavana.

Another confirmation of this comes when Tamal Krishna Maharaja asks Srila Prabhupada, "Is there someone else in India that you want to do this?" and Prabhupada answers, "India, I am here. We shall see. In India, Jayapataka..." this clearly reveals Srila Prabhupada as accepting the context of the matters being discussed related to what should happen at that time, when he was present but not physically fit to perform initiations. Therefore to claim that this conversation and the distribution of its message via the July 9th letter as a 'final order', which once and for all establishes the future of initiations for all time in ISKCON totally neglects to understand the clearly stated purpose for the conversation, and its context, from beginning right to end.

The subject of this conversation was then dictated by Tamal Krishna Maharaja as a letter to all Temple Presidents and GBC's, letting them know that initiations could again be performed, and which devotees Srila Prabhupada had deputed to oversee the giving of names and chanting on beads:

Vrindaban, 9 July, 1977, 77-07-09

To All G.B.C., and Temple Presidents

Dear Maharajas and Prabhus,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet. Recently when all of the GBC members were with His Divine Grace in Vrindavana, Srila Prabhupada indicated that soon he would appoint some of his senior disciples to act as "*ritvik* - representative of the *acharya*, for the purpose of performing initiations, both first initiation and second initiation. His Divine Grace has so far given a list of eleven disciples who will act in that capacity:

His Holiness Kirtanananda Swami  
 His Holiness Satsvarupa dasa Goswami  
 His Holiness Jayapataka Swami  
 His Holiness Tamal Krsna Goswami  
 His Holiness Hridayananda Goswami  
 His Holiness Bhavananda Goswami  
 His Holiness Hamsaduta Swami  
 His Holiness Ramesvara Swami  
 His Holiness Harikesa Swami  
 His Grace Bhagavan dasa Adhikari  
 His Grace Jayatirtha dasa Adhikari

In the past Temple Presidents have written to Srila Prabhupada recommending a particular devotee's initiation. Now that Srila Prabhupada has named these representatives, Temple Presidents may henceforward send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee as an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupada by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the *Gayatri* thread, just as Srila Prabhupada has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the above eleven senior devotees acting as His representative. After the Temple President receives a letter from these representatives giving the spiritual name or the thread, he can perform the fire *yajna* in the temple as was being done before. The name of a newly initiated disciple should be sent by the representative who has accepted him or her to



Srila Prabhupada, to be included in His Divine Grace's "Initiated Disciples" book. Hoping this finds you all well.

Your servant,

Tamal Krsna Goswami, Secretary to Srila Prabhupada

Approved: AC Bhaktivedanta Swami

The fact that this arrangement was not intended to be for all time is again confirmed in the letter resulting from the above conversation, where Tamal Krishna Maharaja says, "The name of a newly initiated disciple **should be sent by the representative who has accepted him or her to Srila Prabhupada**, to be included in His Divine Grace's 'Initiated Disciples' book."

Much effort has gone into trying to analyze and make judgements on what is the actual meaning of this letter. Of course, if you want to know what is actually meant by some particular statement, the very best person to ask is the person who made it. As the letter was written by Tamal Krishna Maharaja, we thought it pertinent to allow him to explain what he actually meant by the letter, and particularly the word 'henceforward' which is often highlighted to have special significance.

On July 31st, 1998, we contacted His Holiness Tamal Krishna Goswami by e-mail, asking him to give some first hand insight about how the word 'henceforward' was used in the letter of July 9th, 1977. As the person who wrote this letter, which was later countersigned by Srila Prabhupada, he is in the best position to know what the intended meaning was. He was asked three questions (in italics) and his answers follow each question.

*1/ Who actually worded the letter of July 9th stating 'henceforward'?*

I did.

*2/ If you worded it, what did you mean by this word?*

'Henceforward' means something like, 'in the foreseeable future,' or, 'until further notice.' My service was to encourage Srila Prabhupada to survive his illness. I made every effort, both when speaking with him, and in correspondence, to be positive about recovering from his disease and continuing to physically lead the Krishna Consciousness Movement in a healthy condition. In fact, I believed this is exactly what would happen, and not until the final days did I ever think otherwise. Therefore, the word 'henceforward,' in fact the entire letter, in no way refers to a situation after Prabhupada's departure, a situation that I was not prepared to normally think of. That situation was already addressed by Prabhupada in the May 28th conversation, which I make brief mention of at the outset of my letter.

*3/ Was there any accompanying explanation to this letter given by you to Srila Prabhupada, when you read it to him for his approval, which may shed more light on Srila Prabhupada's understanding of the term "henceforward" in this context?*

Yes, in the sense that this letter was viewed by Srila Prabhupada as a managerial document for how new disciples could continue to be initiated during His illness, not a blueprint for how the disciplic succession would continue after His departure. Though I have no specific memory about such an accompanying explanation, there undoubtedly would have been some exchange between us along the lines of what we discussed in the garden the previous day.

Hope this makes things a little clearer.

Hare Krishna.

your servant,



Tamal Krishna Goswami

Of course, in the face of such overwhelming evidence, the *ritvik*-theorists take the only possible alternative to attempt to keep to their theory i.e. they try to discredit the evidence of all the most senior devotees in the movement, those whom Prabhupada had personally chosen. However, to write off all of Prabhupada's hand picked men as being ill-motivated is indirectly an offense to Srila Prabhupada himself, implying that he wasn't able to judge the sincerity and motives of his disciples.

A cornerstone of TFO and other *ritvik*-theory papers is the use of the word 'henceforward' in this letter. We have shown that Prabhupada himself didn't use this word, it was in a letter drafted by Tamal Krsna Maharaja. We have also shown how the context of the conversation was clearly relating to performance of initiations in Prabhupada's presence (there are three examples in both the conversation and the subsequent letter that it related to when Prabhupada was present in Vrindavana). However, even if we follow the TFO's logic and pretend for a moment that Prabhupada did use the word 'henceforward', we can easily show examples of where his use of the word didn't necessarily mean for all time/ For example:

"I am so glad to hear that you are now married. I pray Krishna that you may live henceforward happily as a householder, without thinking of a separation from your wife."

Letter to Janis, New York, December 10, 1966

It would be ludicrous to suggest that Prabhupada wanted his devotees to "live happily as a householder" for all time. However this is the main pillar of supporting proof that the author gives for the *ritvik*-theory. Again and again in *ritvik*-papers we read the word 'henceforward', as though it was some grave pronouncement of deep import, which should be stressed over and over again. We should remember that Srila Prabhupada himself never stressed this letter as being the last word or final order for all time, those are the words of the *ritvik*-theorists.

## 8. Integrity of TFO's reporting methods

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this paper is not to provide a point-by-analysis of TFO but rather to present the evidence for and against the *ritvik* theory that it propounds.

However, upon repeated readings of TFO in the course of this work, we were struck at the peculiar style that the author repeatedly employs to make his points. It became clear that the author was going out of his way to provoke an emotional response by use of selective quotes and embellished explanations. The style seemed to try and provoke immediate reactions of anger and excitement to the reader and give instant gratification to the mind and ego.

This is in stark contrast to reading the books of Srila Prabhupada and his faithful followers, which are often difficult to grasp at first, but, after some time, reveal the deep import of the Vedic conclusion contained within.

On closer examination, one can see that TFO contains relatively few long quotes from Srila Prabhupada or sastra, where the obvious meaning was simply repeated as is. On the contrary, TFO is full of quotes where only one sentence or phrase has been isolated, and then lengthy interpretations are given in the author's distinctive style. The author shows a unique ability to be able to contort straightforward facts into what appears at first to be a logical and impressive presentation.

The author's arguments, based on such things as the declaration that Srila Prabhupada "cannot just introduce a pronoun that has no ante-cedent", seem to be very intelligently analyzed and impressively verbose in their explanations, but on closer inspection, it is often found that the primary premise on which the author builds his case is flawed, and therefore all that comes after it is without foundation. Prabhupada gave the example that if you base your system of mathematics on the principle 'one plus one equals three', then your whole system is wrong, no matter how elaborate and impressive you make it.

In fact, on close examination of 'The Final Order' and other *ritvik*-theory literature, it becomes increasingly clear that while Mr. Desai and his fellow writers claim to present the issue fairly, they do an intentionally poor job of representing the case against them. By ignoring material, selectively quoting other material, and even



disingenuously quoting material, they show a disregard for truth and honesty which discredits their claimed motives.

In 'The Final Order' the author makes the following generous-sounding statement. It is made early in the paper, and after reading it, one will naturally get the impression that the paper will try to do an accurate job of treating other people's material and opinions.

TFO: "We have no interest in conspiracy theories, nor do we intend to dredge up the gory details of unfortunate individuals' spiritual difficulties. What is done is done. We can certainly learn from previous mistakes, but we would rather help pave the way for a positive future of re-unification and forgiveness, than dwell too long on past scandal. As far as the authors are concerned, the vast majority of devotees in ISKCON are sincerely striving to please Srila Prabhupada; thus we consider it highly unlikely that anyone is deliberately disobeying, or causing others to disobey, a direct order from our Founder-Acharya."

However, it soon becomes very clear that perhaps the *ritvik*-theorists are more interested in politics than in truth, as they claim to be. For example, the author makes the following statement:

TFO: "As mentioned above, the July 9th letter was sent to all GBC's and Temple Presidents, and remains to this day the only signed instruction on the future of initiation Srila Prabhupada ever issued to the whole Society. Commenting on the July 9th order, Jayadvaita Swami recently wrote:"

And they then very selectively quote part of Jayadvaita Swami's 1996 paper, 'Where the *Ritvik* People are Wrong', and write:

TFO: "Its authority is beyond question [...] Clearly, this letter establishes a *ritvik*-guru system."

They do not give the full quote, nor do they give the context, and in doing so, they try to suggest that they have the support of Jayadvaita Swami in their claims. However, by going to the original paper, we see what Jayadvaita Swami really said:

"The appointment letter is dated July 9th, 1977.  
It is signed by Tamal Krishna Goswami  
and countersigned 'Approved AC Bhaktivedanta Swami.'  
Its authority is beyond question.

The letter explains that Srila Prabhupada has appointed some senior disciples to act as *ritviks*, and it lists eleven disciples Srila Prabhupada has so far named to act in that capacity. The letter then says:

(quote from letter omitted)

Clearly, this letter establishes a *ritvik*-guru system. But one may ask where it says that such a system should continue even after Srila Prabhupada's departure.

Jayadvaita Swami, 'Where the *Ritvik* People are Wrong', 1996



So, the *ritvik-vadis* have taken 4 paragraphs, selected two sentences, and then ignored all of the other material in the letter. The sentence immediately following their quote shows the question at hand – whether the system should continue after Srila Prabhupada's departure. This sentence, however, gets conveniently ignored in their quote, and the only reason for such an obvious omission is to give the reader an impression other than what Jayadvaita Swami intended.

Another example of selective quoting to give a different meaning than that actually intended is shown in the author's quoting of Tamal Krsna Goswami. It is also strange that after stating that "we have no interest in conspiracy theories" etc. he uses the term "Pyramid House confessions" to describe the frank and open discussions with Maharaja that took place at Topanga Canyon in 1980. In using this term the author is using not-so-subtle innuendo to infer that Tamal Krsna Goswami has committed some crime (a confession has a very different connotation to an interview or discussion). The selected quote reads as follows:

TFO: "Actually Prabhupada never appointed any gurus. (...) You cannot show me anything on tape or in writing where Prabhupada says: 'I appoint these eleven as gurus.' It does not exist because he never appointed any gurus. This is a myth." (His Holiness Tamal Krishna Goswami Maharaja. (Pyramid house confessions).)

However the author fails to mention the other things said by Maharaja, which clearly show the actual meaning of his statements. Here's what he left out:

"We made a great mistake. After Prabhupada's departure, what is the position of these eleven people? Obviously, Srila Prabhupada felt that of all the people, these people are particularly qualified. So it stands to reason that after Prabhupada's departure, they would go on, if they so desired, to initiate. Actually a *sannyasi*, for example, is considered to be spiritual master of the *varnas* and *ashramas*. The *brahmana* is considered to be the spiritual master also. Prabhupada showed that it's not just *sannyasis*. He named two people who were *grhasthas*, who could at least be *rtviks*, showing that they were equal to any *sannyasi*. So anyone who is spiritually qualified - it's always been understood that you cannot accept disciples in the presence of your guru, but when the guru disappears, you can accept disciples if you're qualified and someone can repose their faith. Of course, they should be fully appraised at how to distinguish who is a proper guru. But if you're a proper guru, and your guru is no longer present, that is your right. It's like a man can procreate. Similarly, it is a disciple's duty to push forward. He may decide, 'I don't want to take disciples. I want to assist so-and-so.' He has that right. But if he feels the inspiration from within and he has the qualifications, and he realizes what it means to take disciples, that it is a heavy responsibility, and if someone reposes their faith in him, then he should go ahead and do that.

"Unfortunately, the GBC did not recognize this point. They immediately supposed that these eleven people are the selected gurus. . . . This has screwed up our movement terribly."

Clearly Tamal Krishna Maharaja did not reject the essence as stated in the GBC Minutes — that Prabhupada said he wanted his disciples to accept disciples — he only rejected the idea that Prabhupada "appointed" the first 11 men to be gurus and no-one else.

Of course, any synopsis of a conversation has to use 'selective quoting'; to quote each article in full would make it unnecessarily long, in fact we have used selective quoting to highlight certain points in this paper. However, the real criterion for determining whether the selective quoting is proper or improper is to judge whether or not the selected quote, when taken in the full context of the whole letter or conversation, still has the same meaning which is being implied by the quote itself. In other words, if you take a quote in support of a particular point, which has been denied by the author in another part of his presentation, then that is certainly a case of unfair reporting. We assert that this is what Mr. Desai has repeatedly done in his paper, and we have cited two examples above to illustrate our point.

This naturally leads one to ponder whether the author is in fact on a search for ultimate truth, or whether there may be some underlying motive behind his presentation.

(Please refer to Appendix 3 for more discussions on the validity of Mr. Desai's literary tactics.)

Aside from the issue of selective quoting, there is another core issue relating to the content of TFO that should be noted. As



we have already mentioned, in trying to support his theory, Mr. Desai has relied largely on an interpretive analysis of the conversations and written instructions of Srila Prabhupada. Throughout his teachings, Srila Prabhupada stresses that to understand the Vedic knowledge one must try to understand in a submissive way, without unnecessarily interpreting the statements of the *sastras* and the pure devotees.

**"There is no need of unnecessarily commenting on certain things. There is no necessity. Commentary or interpretation required when things are not very clear. Then you can suggest, 'The meaning may be like this.' But when the things are clear, why should you comment? There is no necessity of comment. Just like, for example—this is also from Sanskrit scholar's example—that gangayam ghosapalli. Gangayam: 'On the Ganges there is a neighborhood which is known as Ghosapalli.' Now, this statement is in your front. So one may question that 'The river Ganges is water. How there can be a neighborhood which is known as Ghosapalli? On the water how there can be a quarter or neighborhood of human habitation?' You can question that. Gangayam ghosapalli. Then the interpretation should be, 'No, not on the Ganges. 'On the Ganges' means 'on the bank of the Ganges.' " This interpretation is nice. When one cannot understand clearly, there is interpretation. But when the matter is clear...**

Auckland, April 14, 1972

As followers of Srila Prabhupada, we follow this principle, and we believe that devotees who also try to simply understand the clear and direct meaning in Prabhupada's words will have no doubt as to what is his desire. On the other hand, if we allow ourselves to speculate on Prabhupada's words, there is every chance that we may miss the real meaning his is trying to give us and thus be misled from the path of pure devotional service.



## 9. Conclusion

In this paper we have attempted to bring the *ritvik* debate back to what is the essential question that needs to be answered i.e. What was Srila Prabhupada's instructions on the issue of succession and future initiations within his ISKCON society?

We have tried to document the teachings of Srila Prabhupada from his books, lectures, letters and recorded conversations to show that he repeatedly stressed the importance of following the parampara system and gave his followers direct instructions to become initiating spiritual masters and continue the disciplic succession.

We must say, with all due respect to Krsna Kanta Desai, that throughout the arguments presented in TFO, we see a consistent pattern; he selectively quotes from Srila Prabhupada, his followers and scripture, and then expounds verbose speculative arguments to try to establish his point of view based on spurious initial propositions. However, when carefully analysed, it is often found that he does so at the expense of the essential teachings of the ancient Vedic knowledge, which is coming down through *parampara*. His explanations are often detailed, well-researched and thought-provoking, but in the final analysis, significantly different from those of the *sastras* and the previous *acharyas*.

In closing we would like to give the last word to Srila Prabhupada and the ancient teachings of the Vedas which he so painstakingly transplanted into the Western world.

*yasya deve para bhaktir  
yatha deve tatha gurau  
tasyaite kathita hy arthah  
prakasante mahatmanah*

“Only unto one who has unflinching devotion to the Lord and to the spiritual master does transcendental knowledge become automatically revealed.” Such relationship between the disciple and the spiritual master is eternal. **One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master. And one cannot be a bona fide and authorized spiritual master unless one has been strictly obedient to his spiritual master.**

Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.9.43p



## Appendices

### 1. "GBC Minutes Explained"

by Hari Sauri Das

In TFO it is claimed that the July 9 letter constitutes Srila Prabhupada final and all-conclusive instructions on how he wanted initiations conducted after his departure. Mr. Desai continuously refers to this letter as if it were some kind of instruction manual left behind by Srila Prabhupada to guide ISKCON on initiations in his absence. The July 9 letter wasn't even written by Srila Prabhupada but was a communiqué sent out by his secretary at the time, Tamal Krishna Goswami, to all the devotees to inform them of an emergency arrangement set up to relieve Srila Prabhupada who had become so disabled from his illness that he was no longer able to accept any new disciples. It simply does not make any sense to suggest that this letter over-ruled all other instructions Srila Prabhupada gave on this matter. The May 28 conversation clearly refutes this idea. The adherents of *ritvikvada* have tried to argue that the May 28 conversation is not authentic, that some fiddling with the tapes have taken place.

This notion is being refuted by Hari Sauri Prabhu:

Here's a short article on the *ritvik* appointments, with the GBC minutes from May 28 included:

Minutes from the morning session of an extra ordinary meeting of the governing Body Commission of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, held in Vrindavana, India, on May 28th, 1977.

[note: Meetings were held over two days May 27 and May 28. Most of the discussions that took place concerned the securing of ISKCON properties and other legal matters that suddenly became more immediately relevant with the impending departure of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada. What appears here is a partial reproduction, relevant to the issue of initiations in ISKCON after the departure of His Divine Grace.]

17 members in attendance plus Giriraja dasa [as per the recorded signatures of the members in attendance]: Satsvarupa das Goswami; Panchadravida Swami; Jayatirtha das; Ramesvara das Swami; Gopal Krishna das; Atreya Rishi das; Bhagavan das; Rupanuga das; Hridayananda das Goswami; Guru Kripa Swami; Harikesa Swami; Bali Mardan; Giriraja Das Brahmachary; Svarupa Damodara Dasa Brahmachari; Balavanta das Adhikary; Jagadisha das; Adi Kesava Swami; Jaya Pataka Swami.

#### Resolved:

The following questions will be taken to Srila Prabhupada for his answers. They will be presented by a committee of Tamal Krishna Goswami, Satsvarupa Goswami, Jagadisha, Rupanuga, Bhagavan, Kirtanananda Swami, Bali Mardan.

- 1) How long should GBC members remain in office?
- 2) How can GBC members who leave be replaced?
- 3) In the absence of Srila Prabhupada what is the procedure for first, second, and sannyasa initiations?
- 4) What is the relationship of the person who gives this initiation to the person he give it to?
- 5) Is there any provision for publication of other translations of Vaishnava scriptures by the BBT, after the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada?

[NOTE: These questions were duly asked to Srila Prabhupada before the afternoon session. His answers were recorded on tape and they were also recorded in the GBC minutes book on the next page after the above questions were written down, as follows]:



For the purpose of recording information, Srila Prabhupada's answers to the above questions were given as follows:

- 1) GBC members shall remain permanently. If a GBC member leaves, the GBC can appoint new GBC members.
  - 2) Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future, even after his disappearance. The disciples they accept shall be their disciples and Srila Prabhupada will be their grand spiritual master.
  - 3) New translations of Vedic works can be published in the future, even after Srila Prabhupada's departure, but they can only be done by one who is very expert. At present, Srila Prabhupada acknowledged, there are very few such men.
- [END]

It has been argued by opponents of the current ISKCON guru system that Srila Prabhupada never intended his disciples to initiate disciples of their own. Attempts have been made to discount the tape of the May 28 conversation by claiming that, according to professional analysis, the tape contains many breaks which could indicate splicing or tampering. As their argument goes, it would therefore be unacceptable as evidence in a court of law. That would thus leave only the "ritvik appointment" letter of July 9th as credible evidence of Srila Prabhupada's intentions for the continuance of the parampara. Since that letter states that the persons to whom the *ritviks* would give initiation would be the disciples of Srila Prabhupada their argument is that therefore the current "regular" ISKCON procedure of traditional initiations, whereby the person initiated becomes the disciple of the person giving the initiation, is contradicting the final stated instructions of Srila Prabhupada.

The falsity of this argument can here be seen. First, we find written corroboration of the taped conversation in the official minutes book of the GBC. Since the minutes book would be accepted by any court of law as official evidence of the dealings of the GBC body, there can be no doubt that the said conversation took place and that Srila Prabhupada did in fact state categorically that the disciples whom he would name would accept disciples of their own, who would be his grand disciples after his departure. We should next note that the letter of July 9th, 1977 refers directly to this GBC meeting in its opening paragraph:

77-07-09 To All G.B.C., and Temple Presidents

Dear Maharajas and Prabhus, Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet.

Recently when all of the GBC members were with His Divine Grace in Vrndavana, Srila Prabhupada indicated that soon He would appoint some of His senior disciples to act as

"ritvik - representative of the *acharya*, for the purpose of performing initiations, both first initiation and second initiation. His Divine Grace has so far given a list of eleven disciples who will act in that capacity."

This opening statement establishes without a doubt that the appointment of the 11 *ritviks* stood within the context of the previously established desire of His Divine Grace on May 28 that his disciples would accept disciples of their own after his departure. The question may arise then why Srila Prabhupada states in this letter that the persons to whom the *ritviks* give initiation will be his disciples.

The answer is that at the time of the questions being asked, and for several months before, Srila Prabhupada had stopped giving initiations himself due to his illness. He had no intention of resuming this responsibility directly, unless his condition improved. In the meantime many candidates were accumulating and this was becoming a problem. On May 28th Srila Prabhupada established that after his departure, the men he would name would become gurus in their own right, with disciples of their own who would be his grand disciples. However, during the questioning by Satsvarupa Maharaja and Tamal Krishna Goswami, he also stated that they could not be gurus while he was still present.

At that time he did not state exactly how initiations were to continue while he was still present but unwilling to directly accept the burden himself. This remaining question was thus resolved in the conversation Tamal Krishna Goswami had with His Divine Grace on July 7th, which was translated into the letter of July 9th. When we take the correct context it is clear that the conversation and letter was addressing the problem of the continuance of initiations while Srila Prabhupada was still present, with the understanding of what would happen after his disappearance having already been clearly established. It does not require anything other a simple, straightforward reading of these conversations to understand this.



## 2. My experience with a Rtvik temple

*by Bhaktin Jennifer Barrett*

I thought that I would start off by sharing my first experience with a ISKCON temple. The reason why is because many devotees take shelter else where when they are confronted with impersonalism.

I had a two friends named Racheal and Andy who had been coming to an ISKCON temple in Issaquah and also a Ritvik temple in Greenlake, Seattle. They took me to visit the temple in Issaquah for the first time. I found everything to be quite nice at the temple except for the impersonalism.

We were the only westerners in the temple except for the devotees living there. Every one else was part of the Indian congregation. No one even approached me to find out whether it was my first time visiting the temple. We actually went up to one of the devotees there and asked if there was some kind of catalog that we could order books out of and other KC paraphernalia. I got the impression that we were a burden to this devotee. In the end he did give us an address but then rushed off because he said he was to busy. There was not even any small talk.

That situation made me feel really unwelcome and I expressed this to my friends. They both said that they had felt the same everytime they had come to the Issaquah temple. They then informed me about a smaller temple in Seattle that was really sweet and personal. So from then on I started attending the Sunday feast with my friends at the ritvik temple.

I really liked the atmosphere at this temple. There was a really beautiful altar with small Gaura-Nitai deities, nice kirtan, Bhagavad-Gita classes, prasadam and the devotees there were really friendly and would give a lot of attention to the people attending the feast.

The ritvik temple was more like a Nama-hatta center that was run by a grhastha couple and one was a Prabhupada disciple. There was also a brahmacarini living there at that time and before there were two brahmacarins. About ten or so guests would attend the feast every Sunday.

I was unaware that the temple in Seattle was a ritvik temple. Let alone did I even know what a ritvik was. It was just another temple to me. There would even sometimes be harinam and we would go out and distribute pamphlets inviting people to the Sunday feast.

It was about a month later when they started slowly injecting the philosophy. My friends and I had came an hour early one Sunday to watch the LA Ratha-yatra video. On the video there were some Gurukulies having a debate with some other devotees and we then inquired about the situation. The devotee showing us the video said that the Gurukulies were upset because of the way they have been treated. He then started to tell us stories about Gurukulies getting molested. He told us a few other things that had gone wrong in ISKCON and then laid out the big one.

He started telling us that the devotees in ISKCON were deviating from Srila Prabhupada's instructions and that they were slowly pushing him out of the picture. Being new and innocent we didn't understand why the devotees would want to do this and we became quite upset. We couldn't believe that such things could be happening in Srila Prabhupada's movement.

Later on I was given many different articles about ritvik philosophy. Articles about how Prabhupada wanted there to be 11 (I think that is right, I can't remember by Krsna's mercy:-) ritvik priest that would initiate on his behalf. And many other articles about Prabhupada and how he said this and wanted this. I started to get really angry that all of this was happening. And that's when I became a full on ritvik.

I found myself to be really heavy in the beginning. Sometimes I found myself preaching to ISKCON devotees about ritvik philosophy and trying to hand out the same articles that I read when I first got into it. I became really offensive towards devotees that were a part of ISKCON. I was always trying as much as possible to avoid their association. I was always blaspheming ISKCON devotees.

The devotee that was running the ritvik temple was always telling me different kinds of stories about different ISKCON Gurus. Stories about how this one fell down or this one said that. He was telling me how none of them were pure devotees and that Srila Prabhupada was the only pure devotee and the only Guru. And that all ISKCON devotees who had taken



shelter of these Gurus were all in Maya and were going to suffer because one day their Guru would fall. And in there next life the Guru and his disciples would all suffer in hell for disobeying the orders of the spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada. So as time continued I continued to speak nonsense and I was becoming more and more offensive towards ISKCON devotees.

When I started reading more of Prabhupada's books, I began reading many things about Guru's and also about vaisnava-aparadha and the mad elephant offence. Prabhupada's books started to make me look at things from a different perspective and Krsna gave me the intelligence to ask a few questions.

I then asked the ritvik devotee some questions about taking initiation. He then went into detail about how you would get initiation from a ritvik priest that would initiate you on behalf of Srila Prabhupada. I then started inquiring about how do you know if Prabhupada accepted you as his disciple? How are you suppose to follow his instructions if he is not here to give you any? What if you have a question, how are you supposed to get an answer? The ritvik devotee then told me that Prabhupada is the only Guru, of course he would accept you as his disciple. Prabhupada's instructions are in his book and the answers to all of your questions are in his books as well. And then he started to explain how there are two different types of Gurus, siksha and diksha. And how we could also have a siksha guru and we could take instruction from them as well and if we could approach them if we had any inquiries.

I wasn't satisfied with the ritvik devotees answers because it seemed to me that he was twisting the KC philosophy. Which was true. I didn't ask any more questions after that and just continued reading Prabhupada's books. And the more I read the more I came across things regarding the spiritual master which popped more questions into my head. Like how are you suppose to inquire submissively if you can't physically see your guru? And that the ritvik philosophy is basically saying that Srila Prabhupada and the KC philosophy can't make any pure devotees.

I was starting to feel really horrible about myself because I felt that I was making so many offenses. And I realized the whole time I was going to the ritvik temple that I was never able to follow the 4 regs and chant my 16 rounds for more than a month. My taste for KC was starting to become very bitter. I then decided to go and visit the ISKCON temple in Vancouver more often. Because there, none of the devotees knew that I was a ritvik. So I would get treated like a normal person.

I began to make many friends in Vancouver and was in complete bliss because I had so much association with devotees. And I wasn't constantly blaspheming the devotees nor was I constantly hearing it. When I was in Vancouver my taste for KC was complete nectar and when I would return back to Seattle my taste would again become bitter and I would always be thinking about the next time I would be able to go back to Vancouver.

I then decided that I wanted to move to the Vancouver temple. I moved into the temple there still trying to hide the fact that I was a ritvik, and I felt like I had this heavy pressure on my brain all of the time. The pressure of constantly wondering who is actually speaking the truth. Well, after 5 days after I moved into the Vancouver temple Vipramukhya Swami came back from his travels. I was so excited that he was coming and I was going to be able to meet him and I had no idea why. The thought never even crossed my mind that its just another ISKCON Guru, which was my usual offensive attitude. And when I meet him, I knew and felt in my heart that he was my spiritual master and right then and there I gave up the ritvik philosophy. The heavy pressure that I was constantly feeling immediately disappeared.

The funny thing was, is that I remember when I told the devotee running the ritvik temple that I was going to move to the Vancouver temple, he said I am not worried because you will be back. You will see what I was talking about before in real life. Well I moved to the temple, found my spiritual master, and never came back. I left Vancouver, but I came to the Bhaktivedanta Manor, but I never went back to the ritvik temple.

I strongly believe that with out a spiritual master, I would not be able to follow the 4 regs and chant my 16 rounds. I also seriously doubt that I would even be in the KC movement. Whenever I have had a problem I only really felt satisfied with the guidance that was given to me by my spiritual master. It is such a nice feeling of security when you know that your spiritual master is always there for you and when you are having difficulties you can always take shelter of him.

Of course all of the answers to life's problems are in Srila Prabhupada's books, but its not like we can always find the answers. At least with me I need someone to point out to me where these answers are because I know that I am not always able to find them or I might misinterpret something.

I really do not understand how the rtviks can say that your Guru does not have to be physically present. Who would then engage you in Krishna's service and make sure that you are properly situated in your devotional service? Who would give



you that extra push or point you in the right direction when you feel like you have come to a stop on the path of KC? I know that I need a spiritual master that is physically present.

I am now able to follow the 4 regs. and chant my 16 rounds and I always have the association of so many advanced devotees. But I still believe that Srila Prabhupada is the guru to everyone, but in a different way. To his disciples he is diksha guru and to his grand disciples he is siksha guru. That is why they call Srila Prabhupada the Jagat-guru. Isn't it?

Your humble servant,  
Bhaktin Jen

### 3. The Minutes of the Timeless Order

by Hari Sauri Dasa

(A Reply to Krishna Kant Desai's paper "Hari-sauri's Minutes Turn Back the Clock")

After a brief release of the GBC Minutes from the May 28 1977 GBC meetings in Vrindavana by me, the author of the paper Final Order, and a leading proponent of the "proxy initiation system" commonly known as the ritvik system, Krishna Kant Desai (henceforward the "author") has supplied a response entitled "Hari Sauri's Minutes Turn Back the Clock." Although I found his effort interesting to read, since it contains many flaws and fallacies I feel for the sake of clarity a reply is needed.

In this paper in particular I discuss (not in this order):

- 1) the problems with the author's claim that on May 28 Srila Prabhupada was speaking in the third person about himself in reference to the giving of initiations;
- 2) the controversy over the forensic test of the tape of the May 28 conversation;
- 3) the author's blurring of the PRINCIPLE of Prabhupada's disciples giving initiations with the APPLICATION of it (zonal acharya system);
- 3) the context of the May 28 conversation and the July 9 letter; and
- 4) the value of the GBC Minutes as a historical record.

Other smaller points are also discussed.

[Note: quotes included in this paper from the author's paper are shown in *italics*. Other quotes appear indented.]

- 1) One sentence from the Minutes is pivotal to the GBC's entire position:

According to the author, one sentence from the GBC Minutes is pivotal to the GBC's entire position:

*"2) Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future, even after his disappearance." (From the Minutes)*

The author goes on to state:

*The notion that Srila Prabhupada actually appointed eleven diksa gurus for after his departure was the identical assumption on which the discredited zonal acharya system was founded. This assumption was challenged in the mid-eighties and replaced with what we call the M.A.S.S. (multiple acharya successor system). Thus the 'understanding' of what Srila Prabhupada supposedly said on May 28th 1977, as recorded in these hand written minutes, has already been rejected long ago by the GBC, the very body the author is using these minutes to defend.*

There are a couple of points to observe in the above; a) the omission of the second sentence of the Minute; b) the stress on the word "appoint"; and c) the author's immediate attempt to link what became known as the zonal acharya system as being identical with the naming of disciples who would become diksa gurus after Prabhupada's disappearance.

#### a) Omission

The author significantly misses out the second sentence of the above quoted GBC Minute, which is: "The disciples



they accept shall be their disciples and Srila Prabhupada will be their grand spiritual master."

This is a rather slick attempt by selective quoting to isolate one section of a statement, claim that the GBC's entire position depends on it, and then defeat it. It's called the "straw man" argument and the author's papers are replete with them. But to a discerning reader, it doesn't work. His whole paper simply hammers on this one central theme of "appointment" again and again thinking that the GBC's position is defeated by this. But as it happens, the GBC's entire position is not pivotal on the first sentence, but on the Minute as a whole, and especially the second sentence. The essence of Srila Prabhupada's answer to the question put to him on May 28 1977 was not the business of "appointment" but that he said he would select some men who would give initiations after his disappearance AND whosoever took initiation from them would be their disciples and Srila Prabhupada's grand-disciples. This we shall look into in more detail further down.

## b) Appointments

As far as the author's argument goes, he places great stress on the word "appoint" here and supplies quotes from several leading sannyasis and GBCs (Jayadvaita Swami, Ravindra Svarupa dasa, Tamal Krishna Goswami and the GBC body in Disciple of My Disciple [DOMD]) to support the idea that Srila Prabhupada did not "appoint" anyone to be diksa gurus. Thus he says the GBC Minutes are discredited and rejected by the GBCs themselves:

*Since the GBC, along with its staunchest defenders, no longer accept the GBC's hand written minutes as accurate, we do not see why we should either, particularly since they contradict Srila Prabhupada's signed policy statement on how he wanted initiations to run within ISKCON (the July 9<sup>th</sup> order).*

While it is a fact that among ISKCON leaders there is a difference of opinion on whether Srila Prabhupada "appointed" anyone or not, (there are different understandings of what "appoint" means within our ISKCON context) the fact remains that all of them agree that he wanted his disciples to initiate after his departure.

I contacted both Jayadvaita Swami and Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu to gain from the sources a correct understanding of their original comments. I also have some of Tamal Krishna Goswami's comments from Topanga Canyon and the GBC paper DOMD. A closer look sheds a different light than that cast by the author and shows further misrepresentation by selective quoting by him.

*"Srila Prabhupada did not appoint anyone to be guru for the future, he appointed rtviks to continue in his presence. That much is accepted by everyone." — (His Holiness Jayadvaita Swami Maharaja (San Diego 1990).)*

Jayadvaita Swami's clarification:

**Hari-sauri dasa:** What is your understanding of Prabhupada's instructions to the first 11?

**JS:** I get my first understanding from the paper that names them. There he explicitly appoints them as rtviks, to initiate disciples during his presence who would be his disciples, not theirs.

"By reference to other instruction, given many times over, I understand that after his departure his disciples would initiate disciples of their own.

"By reference to the context, and especially the instructions of May 28, I surmise that he wanted the 11 rtviks to be the first to do this.

**Hari-sauri dasa:** Doesn't the May 28 conversation say clearly that the persons he would name will give diksa after his disappearance?

**JS:** "Clearly" might be overstating the case. But I think that 'the persons he would name will give diksa after his disappearance' is the most reasonable understanding of what he said.

"I think it's also eminently clear from that conversation that Srila Prabhupada expected his disciples to initiate disciples of their own, who would then be his grand-disciples." [END]

Next we can look at Ravindra Svarupa prabhu's statement:

*"And it's a fact that Srila Prabhupada never said 'alright here is the next acharya, or the next eleven acharyas and they are authorized gurus for the movement, for the world.' He did not do that." — (His Grace Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu. (San Diego 1990))*



Ravindra Svarupa prabhu's comments on this quote:

"This seems to be something I said during the San Diego debate, for which I have no transcript. I don't remember the specific context.

"What I meant by that statement is what I have always held:

"First, that Srila Prabhupada did not appoint select men to be his successor acharyas. Acharya, in the sense of the head of an institution, is an office, and it is possible to appoint someone to that office, and Prabhupada did not do that. Rather, in the first line of his will, where an acharya traditionally names his successor at the head of the institution, Srila Prabhupada named the GBC.

"Then, did Prabhupada appoint some people as gurus? Since guru is not an office, like acharya, the idea of appointment is not appropriate. It is not that by appointment I can suddenly 'become' a guru. I think Prabhupada made this clear in the May 28<sup>th</sup> conversation:

**Prabhupada:** And Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, amara ajnaya guru hana. One can understand the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he can become guru. Or one who understands his guru's order, the same parampara, he can become guru. And therefore I shall select some of you." (Srila Prabhupada May 28 1977)

"The condition for being guru is that one understands his guru's order. And Prabhupada said that he would select those he thought the most qualified.

"He indicated this 'selection' by the appointment of rtviks. This did not magically turn them into qualified gurus. (This is the danger of the 'appointment' idea.) They had that capacity, but whether they fulfilled it or not was up to them. They were not the exclusive, hand-picked, chosen few. Prabhupada didn't want that. Yet people were expecting him to give some indication of who would initiate after his departure. So he did so when he appointed rtviks, who mistakenly thought of themselves as appointed successor acharyas.

"Tamal Krsna Goswami made the same point in 1980 in Topanga Canyon. (His point is also frequently misrepresented.)" [END]

As Ravindra Prabhu concludes above, Tamal Krishna Goswami is frequently misrepresented, in this instance by the author's partial quoting of him:

*"Actually Prabhupada never appointed any gurus. (...) You cannot show me anything on tape or in writing where Prabhupada says: 'I appoint these eleven as gurus.' It does not exist because he never appointed any gurus. This is a myth." (His Holiness Tamal Krishna Goswami Maharaja. (Pyramid house confessions).)*

Here's the rest of what Tamal Krishna Maharaja said at Topanga Canyon:

"We made a great mistake. After Prabhupada's departure, what is the position of these eleven people? Obviously, Srila Prabhupada felt that of all the people, these people are particularly qualified. So it stands to reason that after Prabhupada's departure, they would go on, if they so desired, to initiate. Actually a sannyasi, for example, is considered to be spiritual master of the varnas and ashramas. The brahmana is considered to be the spiritual master also. Prabhupada showed that it's not just sannyasis. He named two people who were grhasthas, who could at least be rtviks, showing that they were equal to any sannyasi. So anyone who is spiritually qualified - it's always been understood that you cannot accept disciples in the presence of your guru, but when the guru disappears, you can accept disciples if you're qualified and someone can repose their faith. Of course, they should be fully appraised at how to distinguish who is a proper guru. But if you're a proper guru, and your guru is no longer present, that is your right. It's like a man can procreate. Similarly, it is a disciple's duty to push forward. He may decide, 'I don't want to take disciples. I want to assist so-and-so.' He has that right. But if he feels the inspiration from within and he has the qualifications, and he realizes what it means to take disciples, that it is a heavy responsibility, and if someone reposes their faith in him, then he should go ahead and do that.

"Unfortunately, the GBC did not recognize this point. They immediately supposed that these eleven people are the selected gurus. . . . This has screwed up our movement terribly." [END]

Clearly Tamal Krishna Maharaja did not reject the essence as stated in the GBC Minutes — that Prabhupada said he wanted his disciples to accept disciples — he only rejected the idea that Prabhupada "appointed" the first 11 men to be gurus and no one else.



As far as the GBC paper DOMD goes, even in the quote the author supplies, his point is not supported:

*"There is no appointment of gurus or successors, only a recommendation that certain disciples start the natural process." (The entire GBC, in 'Disciple of my Disciple' page 4 which was released only last year)*

Whether the word "appointment" or the word "recommendation" is used, the essential understanding recorded in the Minutes is obviously upheld in DOMD, that Prabhupada's disciples were authorized by His Divine Grace to become diksa gurus — "the natural process."

As we see above the different interpretations or even rejection of the idea of "appointment" did not and does not alter the acceptance of the central understanding, as the GBC Minutes record, that on May 28 1977 Prabhupada did state that he would select some of his disciples who would give diksa after the time of his departure. The GBC and senior devotees who brought about the "guru reforms" in 1987 all agreed that this was his actual intent, even if they didn't agree on the idea of "appointment."

Call it what you will — "selected" "appointed" "recommended" — the simple fact is that Prabhupada categorically confirmed that he wanted his disciples to give initiations and that the persons who they initiate would be their disciples. This is the actual "understanding" of what Srila Prabhupada said on May 28. It was recorded in the Minutes to that meeting, it was recorded on tape, it is confirmed by the persons who directly participated in that meeting and this has never at any point been rejected by the GBC.

I'll give the final word to Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu:

"It was clear to everybody that Prabhupada wanted diksa gurus after him. But a diksa guru and an appointed successor acharya are hardly the same thing. All I'm saying is that Prabhupada didn't appoint one or many successor acharyas. That's quite different from saying that he didn't want anyone to be diksa gurus. Can the distinction between successor acharya and diksa guru be so subtle that Krishna Kant Desai cannot grasp it?"

Now we'll see why "appoint" is controversial.

### c) Linkage of the Minutes with the Zonal Acharya system

By trying to link the Minutes with the discredited so-called zonal acharya system, the author obviously hopes to discredit the Minutes by association. But we should bear in mind that when the Minutes were written the zonal acharya system did not exist nor had even been conceived of. The Minutes stated in simple terms the answers to straight forward questions put directly to Srila Prabhupada. What was given at that time was the PRINCIPLE — that disciples Prabhupada would recommend would give initiations. Much later on, in trying to APPLY that principle, the zonal acharya system developed (and it wasn't called that either until well into the mid-80s). As Ravindra Svarupa and Tamal Krishna Goswami point out above, the term "appoint" had connotations that lead to a misunderstanding of applying the order.

In 1987 when the GBC and reformists dismantled the zonal acharya system, they were rejecting a bad application and thus the "appoint" concept took a beating. But they did not reject the principle or the central "understanding", that Prabhupada's disciples should initiate others into Krsna consciousness because he knew it to be the actual desire of Srila Prabhupada, confirmed on May 28. The author has tried establish his case by smudging the line between principle and application and this is a mistake.

To recap the author's claim: *"Thus the 'understanding' of what Srila Prabhupada supposedly said on May 28th 1977, as recorded in these hand written minutes, has already been rejected long ago by the GBC, the very body the author is using these minutes to defend."*

As we see from the above, the GBC has never rejected the "understanding" of what Prabhupada said as recorded in the Minutes and it is misleading to claim otherwise.

### 2) May 29 — July 9 axis:

*Since the GBC, along with it's staunchest defenders, no longer accept the GBC's hand written minutes as accurate, we do not see why we should either, particularly since they contradict Srila Prabhupada's signed policy statement on how he wanted initiations to run within ISKCON (the July 9<sup>th</sup> order).*



As I have just pointed out, the Minutes do accurately reflect the "understanding" of Srila Prabhupada's stated desire on May 28. Nor, as the author claims here, do they contradict the subsequent letter of July 9. Rather the opposite: the exchange of May 28 in which Prabhupada said his disciples would initiate after his departure and have disciples of their own set the scene into which the July 9 letter fit. Without understanding the May 28 directives the July 9 letter cannot be properly understood. It does not stand alone.

As I pointed out in brief in my original comments on the GBC Minutes, on May 28 Prabhupada, with phrases such as "grand-disciple" and "disciple of my disciple", and by stating his intention to recommend some of his disciples to act as "officiating acharyas" who he confirmed when asked would give diksa, and by saying he would select some "of you" to be "gurus", unequivocally answered the question as to what would happen after his departure.

The July 9 letter was born out of another consideration (i.e. not the question of post departure initiations), yet unresolved. The enquiry put by Tamal Krishna Goswami on July 7 was as to how initiations would go on while Prabhupada was still present but not willing to accept new disciples himself.

**Tamal Krishna:** Srila Prabhupada? We're receiving a number of letters now, and these are people who want to get initiated. So up until now, since your becoming ill, we asked them to wait.

**Prabhupada:** The local, mean, senior sannyasis can do that.

Prabhupada had stated 5 weeks previously on May 28 he would select some men to be gurus, and so to solve the current dilemma of July 7, he gave the actual names. However since he had also said several times before, and repeated on May 28, that it was the etiquette that in the presence of one's own guru one could not be guru, he confirmed that the people that were to be accepted by these "rtviks" would still be his own disciples. There was no need to restate what would be the status of the new initiates AFTER his departure; he had already established that just five weeks before in response to a direct enquiry on the subject by the whole GBC — "disciple of my disciple."

Thus the July 9 letter was not, as falsely claimed by the author, a "final order," a "policy statement on how he wanted initiations to run within ISKCON," but merely an interim order which got the named persons functioning as gurus even in his own presence yet while still observing the etiquette.

We should note that even after giving this letter, which says that the people those 11 men would accept would be his disciples, Prabhupada indicated that the 11 were in fact to all intents and purposes performing the full-fledged function of gurus in his own presence, for on October 18 he was approached for initiation by an Indian man who flew in all the way from New York:

**Prabhupada:** Hare Krsna. One Bengali gentleman has come from New York?

**Tamal Krsna:** Yes. Mr. Sukamal Roy Chowdury.

**Prabhupada:** So I have deputed some of you to initiate. Hm?

**Tamal Krsna:** Yes. Actually... Yes, Srila Prabhupada.

**Prabhupada:** So I think Jayapataka can do that if he likes. I have already deputed. Tell him.

**Tamal Krsna:** Yes.

**Prabhupada:** So, deputies, Jayapataka's name was there?

**Bhagavan:** It is already on there, Srila Prabhupada. His name was on that list.

**Prabhupada:** So I depute him to do this at Mayapur, and you may go with him. I stop for the time being. Is that all right?

**Tamal Krsna:** Stopped doing what, Srila Prabhupada?

**Prabhupada:** This initiation. I have deputed the, my disciples. Is it clear or not?

**Giriraja:** It's clear.

**Prabhupada:** You have got the list of the names?

**Tamal Krsna:** Yes, Srila Prabhupada.

**Prabhupada:** And if by Krsna's grace I recover from this condition, then I shall begin again, or I may not be pressed in this condition to initiate. It is not good.

**Giriraja:** We will explain to him so that he will understand properly.

**Prabhupada:** Hm? Hm?

**Giriraja:** I said we will explain to the Bengali gentleman just as you have described to us, so that he'll be satisfied with this arrangement.



From the above conversation it is clear that Prabhupada was not willing to accept the new initiate because of his condition — he didn't want his karma. This had already been pointed out by Tamal Krishna Goswami on July 7 — the reason for stopping initiations was so that Prabhupada would not be burdened by the new initiates' karma. Therefore he handed the duty of giving initiation to the men he named. He "deputed" Jayapataka Swami to do the initiation and stated "I stop... I may not be pressed in this condition to initiate." Yet as a matter of etiquette the persons the first 11 initiated were still to be considered Prabhupada's disciples during his presence; and afterwards, as he stated on May 28, they would be his grand-disciples. This etiquette was clearly expressed by Srila Prabhupada on a number of occasions:

"Please accept my blessings. I have received so many letters from both of you and I am replying today summarily, especially your joint letter dated July 27, 1968, and Jaya Govinda's letter dated August 19, 1968. The first thing, I warn Acyutananda, do not try to initiate. You are not in a proper position now to initiate anyone. Besides that, the etiquette is that so long the Spiritual Master is present, all prospective disciples should be brought to him. Therefore if anyone is anxious to be initiated, he should first of all hear our philosophy and join chanting at least for three months, and then if required, I shall send chanted beads for him if you recommend. As we are doing here. Don't be allured by such maya. I am training you all to become future Spiritual Masters, but do not be in a hurry."

-- Letter to Acyutananda and Jaya Govinda -- 68-08-21

**Mohsin Hassan:** Yeah, the tenth. After you, is it any decision has been made who will take over?

**Prabhupada:** Yes. All of them will take over. These students, who are initiated from me, all of them will act as I am doing. Just like I have got many Godbrothers, they are all acting. Similarly, all these disciples which I am making, initiating, they are being trained to become future spiritual masters.

**Mohsin Hassan:** How many swamis do you initiated, American? I'm speaking just on...

**Prabhupada:** About ten.

**Mohsin Hassan:** You have ten swamis. And outside of swamis, what's the lower...

**Prabhupada:** Now, they're competent. They can, not only the swamis, even the grhasthas, they are called dasa adhikari, and brahmacaris, everyone can, whoever is initiated, he is competent to make disciples. But as a matter of etiquette they do not do so in the presence of their spiritual master. This is the etiquette. Otherwise, they are competent. They can make disciples and spread. They can recruit more members in this. They do, but they are being trained up. Just like here in this meeting, one of my disciples, he is acting as priest. It is not myself; he is acting. So some of my students, they are acting as priests, some of them are swamis, so they are competent to make disciples."

-- Conversation Detroit July 18, 1971

"So far as your taking initiation from Brahmananda Maharaja, I have no objection, but it is the etiquette that in the presence of one's Spiritual Master, one does not accept disciples. In this connection, Swami Brahmananda may write me and I will instruct him."

-- Letter to John Milner March 24 1971

"Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bonafide Guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your Spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bonafide Spiritual Master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy."

--- Letter to Tusta Krishna, December 2, 1975

"So we have to follow the acharya. Then, when we are completely, cent per-cent follower of acharya, then you can also act as acharya. This is the process. Don't become premature acharya. First of all follow the orders of acharya, and you become mature. Then it is better to become acharya. Because we are interested in preparing acharya, but the etiquette is, at least for the period the guru is present, one should not become acharya. Even if he is complete he should not, because the etiquette is, if somebody comes for becoming initiated, it is the duty of such person to bring that prospective candidate to his acharya. Not that "Now people are coming to me, so I can become acharya." That is avamanya. Navamanyeta karhicit. Don't transgress this etiquette. Navamanyeta. That will be falldown. Just like during the lifetime of our Guru Maharaja, all our Godbrothers now who are acting as acharya, they did not do so. That is not etiquette. Acharyam mam vijaniyat na avaman... That is insult. So if you insult your acharya, then you are finished."



-- Lecture Adi Lila 1.13, Mayapur April 6 1975

To recap then: The salient point is that after saying on May 28 he would select some of his disciples to be gurus and give initiations and their disciples would be his grand-disciples, and then in July actually naming those men, he activated them in their service as full-fledged gurus with the one proviso stated on May 28 and many times before, that the etiquette should be observed. Having done that, as he indicated on May 28, it was perfectly natural, and according to his desire that they simply carry on as gurus after his departure.

3) No talk of appointments on May 28:

*It should also be pointed out that nowhere in the controversial May 28th tape does Srila Prabhupada say anything about appointing diksa gurus for after his departure.*

This is quite an amazing statement to say the least. Here's the relevant parts of that conversation again which speak for themselves:

**Satsvarupa:** By the votes of the present GBC. Then our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you're no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiation would be conducted.

**Prabhupada:** Yes. I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up, I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating acharyas.

**Tamal Krsna:** Is that called ritvik-acharya?

**Prabhupada:** Ritvik, yes.

**Satsvarupa:** Then what is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and the...

**Prabhupada:** He's guru. He's guru.

**Satsvarupa:** But he does it on your behalf.

**Prabhupada:** Yes. That is formality. Because in my presence one should not become guru, so on my behalf, on my order... Amara ajnaya guru hana. Be actually guru, but by my order.

**Satsvarupa:** So they may also be considered your disciples.

**Prabhupada:** Yes, they are disciples. Why consider? Who?

**Tamal Krsna:** No, he's asking that these ritvik-acharyas, they're officiating, giving diksa. Their... The people who they give diksa to, whose disciple are they?

**Prabhupada:** They're his disciple.

**Tamal Krsna:** They're his disciple.

**Prabhupada:** Who is initiating. (Short pause) He is grand-disciple.

**Satsvarupa:** Yes.

**Tamal Krsna:** That's clear.

**Satsvarupa:** Then we have a question concer...

**Prabhupada:** When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it.

[I have used here the transcript preferred by the GBC. I explain why in the "\*\*Note\*\*" a little further down in this explanation]

Then after some talk about BBT matters, Srila Prabhupada returned to the theme of becoming guru and closes out his comments on initiations as follows:

**Prabhupada:** And Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, amara ajnaya guru hana. One can understand the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he can become guru. Or one who understands his guru's order, the same parampara, he can become guru. And therefore I shall select some of you."

We see here that Tamal Krishna Goswami specifically states that the ritvik acharyas, officiating, give diksa and asks whose disciples will the new initiates be. Srila Prabhupada does not correct him and say, "No, the rtviks don't give diksa." Rather he confirms that they do by answering that the new initiates are "his disciple" meaning the disciples of the person "who is initiating." And just to make sure the relationships are clearly understood, after a short pause he states that in relationship to himself they are "grand disciple."

We should note this clearly: that in a single response to Tamal Krishna Goswami's rejoinder, "They are his disciple" Prabhupada in two sentences establishes the regularized relationship in two ways showing their link with two



separate entities.

**Tamal Krsna:** They're his disciple.

**Prabhupada:** Who is initiating. (Short pause) He is grand-disciple.

- a) In the first sentence he indicates their relationship with the initiator — ("They are his disciple") "Who is initiating."  
 b) After a short pause indicative of a change in subject, in the second sentence he establishes the relationship of the new initiate to himself — "He is grand disciple."

He does this specifically because Satsvarupa dasa Goswami got a little confused about the relationships between the three parties — the initiator, the initiated, and Srila Prabhupada.

Having noted that, we then see Prabhupada immediately repeat exactly the same thing again in his next remarks. Although the GBC are now clear on the point and are ready to move on, he continues on the same subject just to make sure and says:

"When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it."

He repeats the technique: he states the position of the initiator by saying "he becomes regular guru," which in the context of the discussion about initiations clearly means the initiated person is the disciple of the initiator (because if it were otherwise there would be no question of them being a "regular guru"); and again he makes his own relationship with the new initiate clear: "he becomes disciple of my disciple."

This is the way that all the persons present understood it, Srila Prabhupada saw that they understood it in this way and was satisfied they had understood properly and thus this is the way we should understand it.

The whole question is simply about what will happen regarding initiations particularly after his departure; it begins with Prabhupada immediately responding "Yes. I shall recommend some of you," And ends with "And therefore I shall select some of you."

So how the author can state "nowhere in the controversial May 28th tape does Srila Prabhupada say anything about appointing diksa gurus for after his departure" is a mystery to me; we have already discussed the use of the word "appoint" and we saw that it does not affect the essential understanding that Prabhupada clearly wanted his disciples to be diksa gurus after his departure. Perhaps the author thinks that by making such a bald statement the sheer blatancy of it will establish the point and no one will bother to read Srila Prabhupada's actual words.

**\*Note\*:** In another paper by the author entitled "The Real Appointment Tape" (TRAP), he points out that there are differences in some transcripts, notably in the statement made by Srila Prabhupada: "Who is initiating. (He's) (He is) (His) grand-disciples."

Since "He's" and "He is" are the same in meaning, the choice lies between "He's" and "His". The author makes the following claim:

5) Also there is no reason to suppose that Srila Prabhupada did say 'He's as opposed to 'His', since such an interpretation would not make any sense. The pronoun 'He' (from He's) before the term 'grand-disciple' refers to the person BEING initiated, the initiate, or the 'grand-disciple'. However in straight-forward standard English the pronoun usually refers to the immediate ante-cedent (the term that the pronoun follows). In this case that term is 'who is initiating'. It is obvious therefore that in this case the pronoun CANNOT be 'HE' because how can the INITIATE, the person being INITIATED, or 'grand-disciple', simultaneously be the person 'who is initiating'!

6) Even if we allow for the ante-cedent that the pronoun refers to, to not be the most immediate, there is actually NO ante-cedent for the pronoun 'HE' to refer to in the whole conversation, since the speaker Srila Prabhupada has never previously mentioned nor alluded to the initiate, or the person BEING INITIATED, in the singular. The only time previously in the conversation that the speaker or the questioners, ever mention the initiate, it is ALWAYS in the plural. ('Yes, THEY are disciples.') Thus a speaker cannot just introduce a pronoun that has no ante-cedent. It does not make sense. In other words the 'HE' has to REFER to something. But it can not refer to something that has not yet even been mentioned.



7) However the use of 'His', does make sense, since this use CAN be consistent with the most immediate antecedent, 'who is initiating'. In this case the 'HIS' MUST refer to Srila Prabhupada since the 'ritvik' cannot have grand-disciples. Srila Prabhupada would then also be the person 'who is initiating'.

This logic is flawed for at least two obvious reasons:

Firstly, most spoken English is rarely strictly grammatically correct and especially so with Srila Prabhupada. Throughout this very conversation there are numerous instances of violations of grammatical rules in his speech. So to insist on applying strict grammatical rules in this one instance is specious. The author resorts to this because it's his only chance to make the statement appear to fit his own theory.

Secondly, in his insistence on being grammatically correct about the pronoun, he renders the subject complement "grand-disciple" grammatically incorrect. Obviously if the new initiates are disciples of "Who is initiating" and that is Srila Prabhupada it would mean that he was calling his own disciples his grand-disciples. This makes no sense whatsoever. The term "grand-disciple" is the spiritual equivalent of "grandson" which according to the American Heritage dictionary means literally "A son of one's son or daughter." Thus "grand-disciple" means "A disciple of one's disciple."

There has never been an instance where Prabhupada has called his own disciples as his grand-disciples. The only time he has referred to them as grand-disciples is when he was referring to their relationship with his own guru, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur. The use of the word "grand-disciple" by Srila Prabhupada in the May 28 conversation was for clarification, not more confusion. It can only mean one thing: that the new initiate is the disciple of his disciple, and this he repeats for emphasis in his follow-up statement:

**Prabhupada:** When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it.

Therefore the statement "Who is initiating" can only refer to Prabhupada's disciple, not to himself; and the second sentence is correctly rendered as "He's (He is) grand-disciple" as is found in the above transcript.

[There is further discussion on this topic later in this document under 12) The real Issue?]

I will discuss this grammatical argument in more detail in another separate response to TRAP. However, because I want to here deal with the current issues contained in the author's response "Hari Sauri's Minutes....." I will not elaborately answer his mistaken claims here.

#### 4) Strange Questions

The author goes on to comment about the questions the GBC recorded down in the Minutes to be asked to Srila Prabhupada:

- 3) In the absence of Srila Prabhupada what is the procedure for first, second, and sannyasa initiations?
- 4) What is the relationship of the person who gives this initiation to the person he gives it to?

Above are two of the questions the GBC determined should be asked of Srila Prabhupada prior to the May 28th 1977 conversation (as reproduced from the GBC minutes book by the author in his article).

The reader might like to consider question 3) in relation to the picture, often painted by GBC's and their apologists, of how the M.A.S.S. was automatically 'understood' by every devotee since it was 'what Srila Prabhupada always consistently taught for ten long years, and was our tradition for millions of years before that'. We are often quoted the 'law of disciplic succession' as something which was clearly recognized and mentioned hundreds of times by Srila Prabhupada - everyone just becomes a diksa guru on the departure of the acharya- no question about it. Today, if a devotee even questions the above assumptions, he is labeled an offensive moron, wholly bereft of transcendental insight. So why did the GBC ask this question in May 1977? Note it is not asking about the procedure for creating or selecting these 'inevitable' diksa gurus; nor is it seeking to clarify the implementation of this well known and customary 'law of disciplic succession', but rather how initiations would continue AT ALL. Thus we have the most senior devotees in the entire movement, who within a year were being worshiped as though they were as good as Lord God Almighty, all asking the dumbest question imaginable- (according to the current paradigm of intimidation).



There are a couple of considerations here; a) Mood; b) Prabhupada's statements prior to this meeting regarding 'succession'.

#### a) Mood

Srila Prabhupada had personally requested the GBCs to come to him with questions specifically pertaining to what would happen after his departure. The GBC honestly responded to Srila Prabhupada's request and took their duty very seriously. A disciple should never be presumptuous before his spiritual master and the GBC were certainly not in the mood to presume anything, even if they already had a good idea of what their duties were after Prabhupada's departure. Prabhupada told them to ask, and they did so.

We can understand why such questions were required. Considering what had happened to the Gaudiya Matha, Prabhupada wanted his most trusted disciples to be very clear about what was to be done after his departure. Even in 1958 before ISKCON was formed this was his concern:

"Some years ago Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Maharaja my spiritual master attempted to preach this message throughout the world but unfortunately after His departure the movement was not carried by the entrusted successors. I am feeling for it and I have come to Bombay for organizing this."

-- Let. Bombay Jan 1958 Mr. Banerjee

Thus questions regarding the GBC body, the process of initiations, some BBT work and the protection and management of ISKCON properties were highly relevant and were all brought up at various stages during those meetings.

Actually, honest questions to the spiritual master, even if one thinks one knows the answer already, are never the "dumbest imaginable" for a submissive disciple can always learn more, even if the subject is repetitive. As Prabhupada was often fond of quoting:

"Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself said, 'My Guru Maharaja, My spiritual master, considered Me a great fool.' He who remains a great fool before his guru is a guru himself. However, if one says, 'I am so advanced that I can speak better than my guru,' he is simply a rascal."

Of course, for a person who has never experienced full surrender to a spiritual master and has never placed submissive enquiries to a spiritual authority for clarification or confirmation, such a process of enquiry or the questions asked, might seem the "dumbest thing imaginable." But spiritual life is not conducted according to one's imagination but according to transcendental principles of submissive service and enquiry. For those of us who had spent many years living and breathing for the satisfaction of Srila Prabhupada, it was a perfectly natural process.

#### b) Prabhupada's statements prior to this meeting about 'succession.'

It is a fact that throughout the years of his preaching in the West Srila Prabhupada talked openly about his desire to have his disciples initiate their own disciples after his disappearance and gave many statements about the responsibilities of the GBC as managers of the Society. Here are a few of those statements:

"I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975 all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the number of generations. That is my program." (Let. to Hansadutta, 3rd December, 1968)

"From the life of Narada Muni it is distinct that although he was a conditioned soul in his previous life, there was no impediment of his becoming the spiritual master. This law is applicable not only to the spiritual master, but to every living entity." (Let. to Tamal Krsna, 21 June, 1970)

**Prabhupada:** Ah, no problem. G.B.C. means now they should travel very extensive. That is the first principle. Not sit down in one place and pass resolution. No, they must be active. They must act like me. As I'm old man traveling all over the world. Now to give me relief the G.B.C. members... I shall expand into twelve more so that they can



exactly work like me. Gradually they will be initiators. At least first initiation. You must make advance. That is my motive. So, in that way I want to divide it in twelve zones. And you have to make propaganda throughout the whole world. Now if you think that the world is so big twelve members are insufficient, then you can increase more than that and make the zone similarly divided. It is world affair after all.... [...]

**Prabhupada:** He has to manage so much. So extensively touring means for the mission expanding, that is the point. Simply touring not required. Do something substantial to increase the interest of the society. That is the point. So, Karandhara has got many departments so he can be given to (indistinct). So, his position is like that. Similarly Bali Mardan's position is there. He can be also if he has got many engagements, many departments manager. He may not tour but our only aim is that one must take multi-responsibilities. (25 May, 1972)

"...I am very much hopeful that my disciples who are now participating today, even if I die, my movement will not stop. I am very much hopeful, yes. All these nice boys and girls who have taken so seriously... You will have to become spiritual master... you... all my disciples..." (Vyasa-Puja address, London, 22 August, 1973)

"Every student is expected to become acharya. Acharya means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his disciples. I have given you sannyasa with the great hope that in my absence you will preach the cult throughout the world and thus become recognized by Krsna as the most sincere servant of the Lord."

"Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession." (Let. to Tusta Krsna Swami, 2 December, 1975)

"...You each become guru," he said. "As I have five thousand disciples or ten thousand, so you have ten thousand each. In this way, create branches and branches of the Caitanya tree. But you have to be spiritually strong. This means chanting your rounds and following the four rules. It is not an artificial show. It is not a material thing. Chant and follow the four rules and pray to Krsna in helplessness." (Mayapur meeting with the GBC March 1976 — Satsvarupa Das Goswami, Lilamrta VI, page 167)

**Reporter:** Do you expect to name one person as your successor or have you already?

**Prabhupada:** That I am not contemplating now. But there is no need of one person. As other things are managed, but by committee, so this can also be managed, and the committee may elect one person as chief. As, just like in the democracy there are senators and there is president, so it may be I may nominate or they can nominate.

-- June 4 1976 Room conversation with reporter

**Interviewer:** What happens when that inevitable time comes a successor is needed. **Ramesvara:** He is asking about the future, who will guide the Movement in the future.

**Srila Prabhupada:** They will guide, I am training them.

**Interviewer:** Will there be one spiritual leader though?

**Srila Prabhupada:** No. I am training GBC, 18 all over the world.

(SP Interview, 6 June, 1976, Los Angeles)

**Interviewer:** I was wondering if he had a successor to do... Do you have a successor to take your place when you die?

**Prabhupada:** Not yet settled up. Not yet settled up.

**Interviewer:** So what process would the Hare Krsna...?

**Prabhupada:** We have got secretaries. They are managing.

**Ramesvara:** He has appointed from all the disciples a group of secretaries. Each one is in charge of a different sector of the world.

**Interviewer:** How many secretaries?

**Ramesvara:** Presently there is eighteen.

**Interviewer:** And so that group of eighteen secretaries will choose another leader?

**Prabhupada:** I am training each one of them as leader so that they can spread extensively. That is my idea.-- (July 14 1976 Interview with Time)

**Srila Prabhupada:** Everyone of us [is] messiah. Anyone Krsna conscious, he's the messiah. Everyone. Why...? All of us 'Gaurangera bhakta-gane, jane jane sakti dhari, brahmendo tari saksi': 'The devotee of Lord Caitanya,



everyone has so immense power that every one, they can deliver the whole universe.' 'Gaurangera bhakta-gane, jane jane sakti..., brahmendo tari...' That is Gauranga's men.

**Devotee:** Only you are that powerful, Srila Prabhupada. We're like...

**Srila Prabhupada:** Why you are not? You are my disciples.

**Devotee:** We're like the bugs.

**Srila Prabhupada:** 'Like father, like son.' You should be. 'Gaurangera-bhakta...jane'. Everyone. Therefore, Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, 'amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa.' He asked everyone, 'Just become guru.' Follow His instruction. You become guru. Amara ajnaya. 'What I say, you do. You become a guru.' Where is the difficulty. -- (Morning Walk, 13 April, 1977, Bombay)

**Srila Prabhupada:** You become guru, but you must be qualified first of all. Then you become. [...]

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. I shall produce some gurus. I shall say who is guru. 'Now you become acharya. You become authorized.' I am waiting for that. You become, all, acharya. I retire completely. But the training must be complete.

**Tamal Krsna:** The process of purification must be there.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Oh yes, must be there. Caitanya Mahaprabhu wants. 'Amara ajnaya guru hana.' You become guru. But be qualified. (Laughs) Little thing, strictly follower. -- (Room Conversation - 22 April, 1977, Bombay)

"That night, Srila Prabhupada asked Aksayananda Maharaj, 'Are you ready to initiate disciples? I want to retire now.' Aksayananda replied that with Prabhupada's order came the ability to carry it out; therefore, he was ready." -- (From "TKG'S Diary" by Tamal Krishna Goswami, page 41, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1977)

From the above, we can see that Srila Prabhupada talked about all of his disciples becoming gurus in the full sense, of not only giving siksa, which they were doing anyway, but in the sense of giving diksa and accepting disciples of their own. He specifically mentions a number of times that this will be done after his disappearance or in his absence. From 1968 through 1977 he maintained a steady consistency in this. So most GBCs knew this. At the same time, he had, as we see in the later years, sometimes hinted at variations. He talked about all his disciples being gurus; he talked about the GBC members being his successors, each one in charge of a particular zone; he suggested they might elect one amongst them to be the chief among them; he talked about specifically naming some persons — "I shall say who is guru" — and he asked a particular disciple who was not a GBC if he was ready to initiate disciples.

Thus on May 27-29 when the GBC were called for what could have been, and did turn out to be, a final meeting with His Divine Grace, they were perfectly correct to not assume anything, but to ask Srila Prabhupada for a final confirmation when he specifically asked them to. And we see that he did in fact confirm everything he had so consistently said before.

#### 5) Serious doubts on Question 4:

The author goes on:

*Other serious doubts arise when we look at question 4). It is just unbelievable that such a question could ever have been conceived of, unless there had been some prior mention of 'rtviks' or 'officiators' by Srila Prabhupada. It would be totally unnecessary, what to speak of plain daft, to ask- 'what will be the relationship between those who are diksa gurus and those who are their disciples'!! Thus the very fact that question 4) was even asked forces any rational person to conclude that the one thing the GBCs were not expecting to be appointed was straight forward 'regular vanilla' diksa gurus. The GBC must have had some idea that rtviks, or some similar such entities, were on the cards. If not, perhaps the author can enlighten us as to why such questions were ever asked? (We raised this issue regarding question 4) on page 8 of 'The Final Order Still Stands' and have never received an explanation).*

Since the author feels that he has never received an explanation I will try to supply one now (this is not withstanding that a complete response to the Final Order is currently being drafted and after editing will be released by the GBC later this year).

It is not "plain daft" to ask what would the relationships be. It was proper to be open to correction by Srila Prabhupada rather than assume an absolute understanding. We can consider two statements made in April and May, just prior to the GBC formulation of their questions on May 28:



**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. I shall produce some gurus. I shall say who is guru, 'Now you become acharya. You become authorized.' I am waiting for that. You become, all, acharya. I retire completely. But the training must be complete." —  
**April 24 conversation**

"That night, Srila Prabhupada asked Aksayananda Maharaj, 'Are you ready to initiate disciples? I want to retire now.' Aksayananda replied that with Prabhupada's order came the ability to carry it out; therefore, he was ready." -- (From "TKG'S Diary" by Tamal Krishna Goswami, page 41, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1977)

These comments indicated that it was possible that Prabhupada may start some of his disciples giving initiations even in his own presence. Since it was known that there was an etiquette about disciples not accepting disciples in the presence of their own guru, the GBC therefore felt it pertinent to get a clear statement from Srila Prabhupada just what the relationships would be.

As we see from the July 9 letter, Prabhupada, in responding to the question of how initiations would go on while he was still with us but not willing to do it himself, qualified the appointment of his rtviks by saying that the persons they initiate would be his disciples. This was to satisfy the etiquette that he mentioned on May 28 in response to the first "plain daft" question put to him by the GBC. It was something different from the previous standard, an interim arrangement that he revealed within the context of stating that after his departure the persons the rtviks would initiate would be their disciples and his grand-disciples.

As it turns out, the GBCs' second question was quite prescient. Even though the relationships were clearly stated by Srila Prabhupada in response to the "plain daft" "dumb" questions, there are those that even now cannot, or will not understand.

The author says "*Thus the very fact that question 4) was even asked forces any rational person to conclude that the one thing the GBCs were not expecting to be appointed was straight forward 'regular vanilla' diksa gurus.*"

This statement highlights the author's biggest problem. He feels that his own rational thinking and analysis of the facts is better than simply enquiring from the GBC what they were actually expecting and why they asked the questions they did. Of course, he has a particular reason for making such conclusions and thus he cannot see the facts in an objective fashion nor hear objectively from those that were there and were directly instructed by Srila Prabhupada. However, the GBC cannot be subjected to his mental projections anymore than Srila Prabhupada was to ours.

As I have pointed out, honest disciples have to assume nothing about what is in the mind of their spiritual master, but proceed on the basis of real inquiry. The fact was that from all the indications given by Srila Prabhupada over nearly 11 years the GBC would have had every right to expect Srila Prabhupada to confirm that he wanted his disciples to become "regular vanilla diksa gurus." But because the opportunity was given, they wanted to get a final confirmation from him that this was so. That is the transcendental system.

#### 6) Minutes Not an Accurate Record:

The author proceeds on:

*(Hari-sauri dasa's) NOTE: These questions were duly asked to Srila Prabhupada before the afternoon session. His answers were recorded on tape and they were also recorded in the GBC minutes book on the next page after the above questions were written down, as follows...*

*This is a subtle misrepresentation, since Srila Prabhupada's answers, as given on the tape, are not recorded verbatim in the minutes book. A brief glance at the wording of the hand written GBC minutes is enough to see there is little resemblance to any of the four different official transcripts of the May 28th tape. Rather the GBC minutes book records what the GBC thought were the answers Srila Prabhupada had given, expressed very much in their own words.*

I will agree that a subtle misrepresentation inadvertently crept in here. I assumed it would be clear to any reader that the Minutes are a succinct representation of Prabhupada's answer rather than a direct transcript since the transcript of the conversation has already been widely circulated. It was certainly not deliberate and I apologize to any reader who felt it might have been.



At the same time, this "subtle misrepresentation" does not affect things in the way the author claims. Of course, the author knows all about the art of misrepresentation as I have noted at the beginning of this paper. Here again we see it is quite a deliberate misrepresentation on the author's part to say that there is little resemblance of the Minutes to any of the four different official transcripts. Anyone who reads all the materials mentioned can see that the Minute clearly states what Srila Prabhupada clearly stated:

"2) Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future, even after his disappearance. The disciples they accept shall be their disciples and Srila Prabhupada will be their grand spiritual master."

The only possible discrepancy lies in the writing of the word "appoint" rather than "recommend" and "select" which were the two words Srila Prabhupada used. However, none of the four different transcriptions of the tape vary on the point about Prabhupada saying his disciples would initiate disciples of their own after his departure. They only vary on small differences which do not affect the essential understanding and meaning. Again I remind the readers that the author's claims that they do, with his dispute of the phrase "He's (His) grand-disciple" and his attempt to show from this that Prabhupada was speaking about himself in the third person, is completely specious and renders the conversation meaningless.

### 7) A thick plot?

The author goes on:

#### *AUTHOR'S PRINCIPAL EVIDENCE (IN BOLD):*

*For the purpose of recording information, Srila Prabhupada's answers to the above questions were given as follows:*

- 1) GBC members shall remain permanently. If a GBC member leaves, the GBC can appoint new GBC members.*
- 2) Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future, even after his disappearance. The disciples they accept shall be their disciples and Srila Prabhupada will be their grand spiritual master.*
- 3) New translations of Vedic works can be published in the future, even after Srila Prabhupada's departure, but they can only be done by one who is very expert. At present, Srila Prabhupada acknowledged, there are very few such men.*

#### *THE PLOT THICKENS:*

*As already stated these minutes are not hard evidence for what Srila Prabhupada intended or stated, since they were neither authored, checked or signed by him, (unlike the July 9th letter).*

Whatever the author means by the phrase "hard evidence" (my dictionary says "real or unassailable" as one possible meaning) what appears in the GBC Minutes book as a record of their exchange with Srila Prabhupada is indeed an accurate statement of what Prabhupada intended (the use of "appoint" does not change the intention, which was to select some of his disciples to give initiations). Furthermore, as Prabhupada's duly authorized representatives the GBC were empowered by him to run the affairs of the Society and their records are legal and official evidence of their proceedings. And as we can observe, the July 9<sup>th</sup> letter, duly signed and authorized by Srila Prabhupada, states what the Minutes state — that at the GBC meeting Prabhupada said he would appoint some of his disciples to give initiations. Thus Prabhupada himself confirmed the statement of the Minute.

### 8) A typed report of the meeting:

*"Further we have in our possession a typed version of these very minutes in the form of a GBC report which was allegedly distributed soon after this meeting. This typed report of the meeting is identical in all respects to the hand-written GBC minutes book (as above), except for one important omission, minute 2), the very same minute the author deems pivotal to his entire case. This minute for some reason, has been totally removed."*



The existence of a subsequent typed document with Minute 2 missing does not mean it is missing from the original, nor missing from the tape of the conversation, nor missing from the memories of the GBCs who asked the questions. Since I haven't seen it I can't say why the document the author has contains this discrepancy, who typed it, nor whether it is even an official ISKCON document. Furthermore, the author very carefully says "allegedly distributed." Was it distributed or not? If it wasn't then it is valueless. If it was, then let the author produce the document, in its entirety, for all to see. Perhaps we can figure out why this is missing from it or ask the person who produced it.

There again, perhaps the document contains other information that the author does not want us to see and that is why he has not reproduced it here. He is very keen to dice and splice every little word and quote away ad infinitum. Why has he not produced this mysterious document? Or perhaps this is simply a red herring, produced for the purpose of creating suspicions in the mind of the innocent. The plot thickens indeed.

#### 9) Whiffs of Intrigue :

*It seems that whenever the GBC or their apologists bring up the May 28<sup>th</sup> conversation as a means of modifying the final July 9<sup>th</sup> order, they simply raise more questions than they answer i.e.,- tapes exhibiting strong signs of falsification, written minutes which do not properly correspond with a contemporaneously typed report, suggested appointments which have long since been rejected etc. Thus the whiff of intrigue merely grows stronger by the day.*

a) It seems that whenever those who seek to analyze the May 28 conversation and the July 9<sup>th</sup> letter without consulting with those that were actually there make a presentation, they seek to conjure up specters of intrigue and suspicion. This is of course necessary in order to create inroads into the minds of the innocent to make them receptive to the unlikely and convoluted explanations they put forth; but such whispers of plots, whiffs of intrigue and suggestions of falsifications are merely another ploy and also show a duplicity on the part of the author: With the above statement the author goes against his own so-called methodology stated in the beginning of his paper Final Order:

*"We have no interest in conspiracy theories, nor do we intend to dredge up the gory details of unfortunate individuals' spiritual difficulties. What is done is done. We can certainly learn from previous mistakes, but we would rather help pave the way for a positive future of re-unification and forgiveness, than dwell too long on past scandal. As far as the authors are concerned, the vast majority of devotees in ISKCON are sincerely striving to please Srila Prabhupada; thus we consider it highly unlikely that anyone is deliberately disobeying, or causing others to disobey, a direct order from our Founder-Acharya.*

b) As far as the other whiff of intrigue goes — "*tapes exhibiting strong signs of falsification*" — this is worth examining in more detail, if only to exorcise the ghost and lay it to rest.

Let's look at the introduction and summary of the report from Norman Perle, the forensic expert who examined it [I left out the detailed points given by Perle because of the length of them but they are available]:

September 22, 1997

ATTN : Mr. Harvey Mechanic, Esq. (Mrigendra dasa)

#### TAPE ANALYSIS REPORT

On August 26, 1977 I received a standard analog tape recording from your office for examination. On the label of the cassette I affixed a tamper proof Security Seal Number 16959 for identification. My assignment was to review and analyze the recording in order to determine if the content appears to be authentic, in that the words spoken are in context and appear to be all the words spoken at the moment in time the recorded event occurred. Additionally, there should be no signs of inappropriate stopping and restarting of the recorder as well as the other classifications of signs suggestive of falsification. The analysis procedure included computer waveform analysis, spectrographic chart analysis, FFT spectrum frequency analysis and a critical aural review of the audio.

#### SUMMARY

In conclusion, this recording exhibits strong signs suggestive of falsification. I do not believe that these



deficiencies might possibly be the product of some mechanical process or problem within the recording or duplication process and I believe that they exist at what is considered to be a higher degree than that of a coincidence.

I strongly recommend that an independent Forensic Analysis be conducted on the Master recording in order to determine the authenticity and originality of the evidence. This analysis requires what is represented as the original recording and the original tape recorder upon which this recording was represented to be made. The forensic instrumental tests include computer analysis, FFT spectral analysis, spectrogram chart analysis, and original recording. Additionally, the recordings will be compared for dissimilarities as a critical listening procedure is performed. These tests are directed to discover (1) if the recording has been edited in any manner so as to effect the context of words (i.e.: erasures, inappropriate stopping and restarting of the recorder), (2) if, in fact, the audio material is an original source recording and not a re-recorded version. The testing would determine the cause of any deficiency within the audio track and is focused on establishing an opinion as to the integrity and authenticity of the evidence.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to call me.

Norman I. Perle — American Board of Recorded Evidence Nationally Certified Expert

[END]

In addition to the above original report, further questions were asked, as reported by the author:

*"If the copy contains signs suggestive of falsification, that copy could NOT be relied upon as a faithful and accurate rendition of the original."*

*"If the preliminary analysis discovers ANY area that is significantly suggestive of falsification, then the ENTIRE recording is in question and a Forensic Analysis should be done." — (N. Perle, 13/10/97 & 14/10/97, in response to query asking if ANY part of a tape can be taken as being 'intact', after a preliminary analysis had discovered irregularities)*

Finally we can look at Mrigendra prabhu's comments to the GBC committee members who commissioned the investigation:

9/24/97

Dear Committee members,

Here is the copy of the e-mail report that I have received from Mr. Perle. I expect to receive the hard copy in the mail by Wednesday. After I received this e-mail report, I checked on my copy of the tape and the points that Mr. Perle pointed out in his report were either before or after the section that we are concerned about. In other words, Tamal Krishna introducing the committee from the GBC to ask questions starts after 11 minutes 37 seconds into the tape and that conversation goes to the end of the tape.

When I asked him to confirm on the phone whether I was correct that there was no start or stop during the disputed portion of the tape, Mr. Perle did confirm that but said that the tape 'stinks', because of the editing and that it would not be admissible as evidence in a court of law in the United States.

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There are three considerations from the above:

- i) The 'unexplained' stops and starts on the tape Perle examined.
  - ii) Perle's examination of a copy of the original
  - iii) The question of "legality" as it applies to ISKCON
- i) "Unexplained" stops and starts on the tape Perle examined.

As it is, there is a simple explanation for the starts and stops on the tape. I personally recorded Srila Prabhupada almost every day for about 10 months. I was the first one to use a cassette recorder rather than the old reel-to-reel. My habit, which was emulated by my successor recordist, Tamal Krishna Goswami, was to use a tape until it was full. Consequently, multiple short conversations may be found on many of the tapes, replete with the necessary stops and starts. Not only that, if there was an extended break in a conversation we had the habit of pausing or stopping the tape recorder and then starting up again when the conversation restarted. Thus it is not surprising that the tape Perle examined has many stops and starts. There are heaps of tapes just like it in the Archives.



Why they were "unexplained" to Norman Perle is easy to explain. Here's what Badrinarayan Prabhu, the Chairman of the commissioning committee has to say:

"[After setting up the committee] The question was the funding. Mrigendra contacted Kalakantha and agreed to pay, if he could be a member of the committee. So we added him. He is the one who found Mr. Perle and it went from there.

We found out later on that Mrigendra had a heavy ritvik bias. He also offered poor instructions as to the history of our taping system, and immediately jumped on the report as soon as it came out from Mr. Perle, putting his conspiracy spin on it — that the tape was 'edited' without any attempt to offer the full explanation that the tape had starts, stops, and re-winds on it, because one tape had multiple conversations on it, as you well know. He also deliberately left out Perle's statement that the full 18+ minutes of the famous 'appointment' conversation has no signs of editing, erasures, starts and stops...rather it is 'virgin' and unadulterated."

In other words, Norman Perle was never advised to expect multiple conversations and the consequent starts and stops on the tape by the person who was dealing with him, Mrigendra dasa.

## ii) Perle's examination of a copy of the original

We note that Perle's concern is that the copy of the tape that he has is suspect because it has what he calls signs suggestive of falsification. He therefore calls for the examination of the Master to see if the two are the same. This has lead some devotees to suspect that either the original tape is mysteriously missing, or perhaps the GBC or Archives are hiding the original tape and can only produce a copy that has been doctored for a particular purpose.

We should first hear from the Archives personnel themselves to clear this "mystery" up:

**(Letter from Sriman Ranjit dasa, Bhaktivedanta Archives, July 14 1998):**

"The important and relevant facts about the tape are:

1. The Archives has the original tape.
2. The original tape is made up of various conversations over that time period and whoever was operating the tape recorder switched it on and off at the beginning and end of these conversations.

The relevant facts about the Perle examination are as follows:

The Archives were approached by Mrigendra Prabhu and Sri Svarupa Devi Dasi to have the tape examined by an expert.

The Archives policy is that if someone wants such an original tape to be sent somewhere to be examined, a representative of the Archives must be present to prevent tampering or damage, etc.

So we asked Mrigendra whether he wanted the original or would a copy be OK. He contacted Perle, and Perle said that a copy would be fine. So we took the DAT master (which is the archival digital copy of the tape) and we made a cassette copy of the digital master and sent this to Perle.

**Fact 1** is that Perle has never examined the original.

**Fact 2** is that Perle in his initial report mistook the devotee operator switching the tape recorder on and off as 'editing.'

**Fact 3** is that Perle admits that the section which includes the ENTIRE appointment conversation is not edited and there is no switching on and off of the machine during this period.

**Fact 4** is that Perle admits at the end of his report that no decisive conclusion about the tape can be made until the original is examined.

**Fact 5** is that there are many tapes from that time period that have the same kind of switching on and off.

**Fact 6** is that in brand, appearance and from the writing on the cassette case, the tape matches the others in the Archives from that time period.

Further to complicate matters, if one were to do a true investigation one would have to resurrect the original tape recorder to see if the stop and start signatures on the tape match the signatures made by the recorder and even if you



could find the tape recorder, after 20 years who knows if the mechanism of the recorder can be relied upon. The real evidence is that the devotees at the meeting remember it taking place and remember that this is what Prabhupada said." [END]

Badrinarayan Prabhu, current GBC Executive Committee Member, also stated the following in a letter to Dharmasetu dasa dated approx. October 1997:

"The setting is that Mrigendra sent Mr. Perle (a forensic expert) the tape he got from the Archives. It had multiple recordings on it, made over several days, because that is how the taping was done in those days..... Srila Prabhupada's secretary waited until the tape was full, and then sent it off.  
"Mrigendra, who has a strong bias to the ritvik side, did not give Mr. Perle any background information as to how the recordings were made. Mr. Perle's report noted 'stop' and 'start' signatures....where the tape player was shut off and then started again. As soon as these are there, the tape is considered 'edited.' But most worthy of note is that the section where the GBCs ask Srila Prabhupada about initiations in the future is certified by Mr. Perle to be unedited and uninterrupted."

(Note: Badrinarayan Prabhu included in this letter a report from the Archives responding to every point Norman Perle raised in his analysis. Since it is lengthy I have not included it here).

We see from Ranjit and Badrinarayan prabhu's reports that the decision to examine a copy was made by Norman Perle, not the Archives. And that Perle was not informed by Mrigendra about the standard method of recording Srila Prabhupada's conversations etc.

### iii) The question of "legality" as it applies to ISKCON

The forensic analysis deals with the question of the authenticity of the tape that Perle examined from the point of view of its acceptability in a modern court of law. Clearly it is not acceptable to the courts. According to the criteria set by Norman Perle "there should be no signs of inappropriate stopping and restarting of the recorder as well as the other classifications of signs suggestive of falsification." Since there are such signs this suggests falsification of the tape and he recommends that further tests be done on the original. Note that he can only say "suggests" — he does not say they are proof.

Even if Perle examines the original, he will find the same stops and starts (Ranjit has certified that the copy and the original are the same). Does this mean the tape is suspect and should be rejected? Or do we accept it along with the scores of other recordings of Srila Prabhupada that show similar methods of recording?

From a spiritual stand point it actually doesn't matter whether the tape is "legally" acceptable, because we know the conversation took place from other sources also — the GBC men who were there, and the GBC Minutes. Thus we do not discount Srila Prabhupada's words simply because of the method of recording them nor because a secular court might not accept them.

Apart from this, just to restate it again for emphasis, as we see from Mrigendra's letter to the GBC Committee, Perle found no sign of signs "suggestive of falsification" on the entire length of the section of recording of the May 28 conversation—"When I asked him to confirm on the phone whether I was correct that there was no start or stop during the disputed portion of the tape, Mr. Perle did confirm that..." So whether the rest of the tape "stinks" and "because of the editing ... would not be admissible as evidence in a court of law in the United States" or not, the recording of the conversation we are dealing with was admitted to be OK.

### 10) The commissioning of the tape analysis:

*The one point the author has curiously omitted to mention is the fact that it was the GBC themselves who were responsible for commissioning the analysis in the first place. Thus the assertion that the tape 'would be unacceptable as evidence in a court of law', is not just our 'argument', it is the considered opinion of a world expert forensic analyst (Perle) who was appointed by the GBC themselves to examine the tape! Thus the party responsible for discounting the tape as suitable evidence is not 'us' but the GBC. Of course the GBC may chose to ignore their own expert, but this in itself might appear rather suspicious. (In any event since the conversation only clearly confirms ritvik for after departure we are not troubled either way).*



It matters little who commissioned the analysis. My point in bringing up the legal question in the first place was in response to foolish claims by others that in the light of the forensic report the May 28 conversation has therefore to be dismissed from consideration in our discussion of Prabhupada's intentions re: the giving of initiations after his departure. This idea was brought up by some ritvik advocates to some devotees in the Philippines after a visit I made there in January and I was asked to respond to it. And even before that, when the tape analysis first came out by someone who was involved in getting the analysis done:

Over the past many years the GBC have used the May 28th 'Appointment Tape' to prove that Prabhupada wanted them to be gurus in their own right. They have used this 'evidence' over the July 9th letter where Prabhupada clearly appoints Rtviks to initiate on his behalf.

"The expert says that the tape 'exhibits strong signs suggestive of falsification' (cuts in 6 places) and would not be considered in a court of law because it is not an original unedited tape. The onus is now on the GBC to come up with the original unedited tape. If this tape does not exist then their version of the May 28th conversation cannot be accepted." (letter sent out by Sri Svarupa devi dasi advertising on behalf of PADA.)

What Sri Svarupa dd. is saying here is that the May 28 conversation "cannot be accepted" unless the "original unedited tape" is produced. But the criteria for "unedited" that she is referring to here is Perle's — *"If the preliminary analysis discovers ANY area that is significantly suggestive of falsification, then the ENTIRE recording is in question and a Forensic Analysis should be done."* In other words any 'start' or 'stop' signature. That means the originals of most of the taped records we have of Prabhupada speaking "cannot be accepted" since there are very few that have no stops or starts on them. Since the GBC/ BBT Archives possess the original of the conversation and it has breaks on it, only the July 9 letter, according to this logic, remains as evidence of Prabhupada's desires.

Very convenient for some, but totally dishonest.

The author's statement *"Of course the GBC may chose to ignore their own expert, but this in itself might appear rather suspicious,"* is simply another of his attempts to rouse the specter of suspicion and use it as a tool to refute Srila Prabhupada's own words. In recognition of the falsity of his own argument the author adds in parentheses, *(In any event since the conversation only clearly confirms ritvik for after departure we are not troubled either way).*

With this statement he at least gets full marks for hutzpah. As far as reality goes, that's another thing. The conversation is far from confirming ritvik i.e. proxy initiations for after Prabhupada's departure. It does quite the opposite.

#### 11) The Whiff evaporates

After trying to predicate the mind of the reader with suspicion about the authenticity of the recording, the author then states:

*With regards the above minute 2 the author states the following:*

*First, we find written corroboration of the taped conversation in the official minutes book of the GBC. Since the minutes book would be accepted by any court of law as official evidence of the dealings of the GBC body, there can be no doubt that the said conversation took place and that Srila Prabhupada did in fact state categorically that the disciples whom he would name would accept disciples of their own, who would be his grand disciples after his departure.*

*The above conclusion is completely groundless. We have never doubted that 'said conversation took place'. This is not an issue of contention, and thus to even mention it is irrelevant.*

Any attempt to have the conversation dismissed, (and trying to have the tape dismissed is just such an attempt) is clearly most relevant. I am glad that the author does acknowledge the conversation and that it needs to be honestly dealt with.

After deliberately introducing an element of doubt he now wants to play innocent and say it is all irrelevant. All well and good. Whether the author himself has ever tried to have the conversation dismissed from consideration due to the so-called suspect tape, is not the point; I wrote my short paper in response to claims by ritvik advocates who were saying just



that — that the legal unacceptability rules the conversation out. If the author has his own view and wants to jump in now with his own response, that is his prerogative. Perhaps he feels his is the only voice on the ritvik issue, but it is not. My point was well founded and directed to the foolish attempts to isolate the July 9 letter. It is relevant and it stands.

## 12) The real issue?

*The issue has always revolved around what was the intended outcome or conclusion of this conversation, and whether the tape is a completely faithful record of it. The GBC minutes book would merely be a record of what the GBC thought was the conclusion of the conversation. This also has never been in doubt. We all know only too well what the GBC thought, and are still thinking about what was supposed to happen after Srila Prabhupada's departure; indeed we have expended a great deal of energy in trying to modify and influence these subtly shifting mental distillations. Thus these minutes, by definition, can shed no new light on the issue at hand since they only relate what a group of people thought Srila Prabhupada said or meant, not necessarily what he actually said or meant.*

What the author is saying here is that the understanding of what Srila Prabhupada said on May 28 is simply a question of whose opinion we want to believe. Its either his or the group of men that were in the room with Srila Prabhupada asking the questions. The neutral observer has two choices.

- 1) Either they go by the tape, the meaning of which is confirmed by the GBC Minutes recorded just an hour or so after the conversation, and by the vouch-safe of the persons who were actually in the room with Srila Prabhupada asking the questions; or
- 2) They have to go by the opinion of the author, coming into the picture 15-20 years later, whose whole argument stands on his own hearing of the tape — about which he expresses doubts above as to whether it is a “completely faithful record” of the conversation!

Taking the statement made by Srila Prabhupada “Who is initiating. He’s (His) grand-disciple.” the author in TRAP has produced some clever word-jugglery based on his understanding of English grammar in an attempt to establish that when Prabhupada said the new initiates would be disciples of “Who is initiating,” this meant Srila Prabhupada himself.

Let’s hear from a couple of devotees who happen to be English language experts just whose understanding of that conversation they think we should listen to:

Sriman Bharatasrestha dasa, (William G. Wall, Professor of Vaisnava Literature and Theology; BA (summa cum laude), MA, Ph.D in English) responded to a question I put to him thus:

**Hari-sauri dasa :** In trying to understand whether Prabhupada said, ‘His grand-disciple’ or ‘He’s grand-disciple’ is it grammatically correct for the reader to refer first to the antecedent to decide? Surely in a two word sentence ‘He’s (His) grand-disciple’ wouldn’t you first look at the rest of the sentence to figure out the first word, a pronoun, rather than look back at the antecedent?”

**Bharatasrestha dasa :** I would have to say that, while in formal writing a pronoun must refer to the nearest preceding noun, in speech there are few, if any, rules. We are dealing with complex grammars operating in the ‘understood’ mode. Noam Chomsky built a career on that. A 2 year old’s one syllable sentence is grammatically complete according to the Theory of Innate Grammar, and it is also true according to parents, who do, in fact, understand the child’s utterance despite the fact that grammatically necessary ingredients have been omitted, just as those present in the room understood Srila Prabhupada to mean that after Srila Prabhupada’s passing new devotees would be disciples of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples. See JL Austin, Searle, Strawson, Gricce and Speech Act Theory.

“I’m sure you can find other cases where Srila Prabhupada used clipped speech, denying a pronoun its formal antecedent. If Srila Prabhupada had been writing for publication, it would be a different matter. The authority in this case, according to Speech Act Theory, would be Tamal Krishna Goswami [to whom Prabhupada was speaking]. Srila Prabhupada meant what those in the room say he meant. Period. This is, by the way, Philosophy, not Grammar.”

The point about speech being taken in the “understood” mode is important. All of us have experience of gaining an understanding of what another person is saying to us without there necessarily being any real observance of grammatical rules in the exchange. Indeed, sometimes a meaning is conveyed without words at all! A conversational exchange is not just words. The intonation of the voice, the expression of the face, the movement of the eyes and eyebrows, the use of the hands and other bodily parts — body language if you will — are all important in conveying a message, and in understanding what



has been conveyed.

In the exchange between Srila Prabhupada and the GBC all of this was at play and is reflected in the conversation:

**Prabhupada:** They're his disciple.

**Tamal Krsna:** They're his disciple.

**Prabhupada:** Who is initiating. He's (He is) grand-disciple.

**Satsvarupa:** Yes.

**Tamal Krsna:** That's clear.

**Satsvarupa:** Then we have a question concer...

**Prabhupada:** When I order, 'You become guru,' he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it.

**Satsvarupa:** Next we have a question about the BBT.

When Srila Prabhupada clarified the exchange by saying "Who is initiating. He's grand-disciple," the GBC men present (not just Tamal Krishna Goswami and Satsvarupa Maharaja) all understood the same thing — that "Who is initiating" referred to Srila Prabhupada's disciple, the person whom he would "recommend" to perform diksa; and "He's (He is) grand-disciple" referred to the relationship between Srila Prabhupada and the new initiate. Thus they confirmed their understanding by saying "Yes" and "That's clear."

They were ready to move on, but Srila Prabhupada wanted to re-iterate the point just to ensure it was well understood. Again he re-stated the same thing, in slightly different terms. About his disciples he says "When I order 'You become guru' he becomes regular guru. That's all." And about the new initiate's relationship with himself he says "He becomes disciple of my disciple." Satisfied that they have understood him clearly, he concludes this question and answer topic with "That's it." They all then move on to another topic, concerning the BBT.

For a second expert opinion I consulted with Sriman Babhru dasa, who is a thirty year disciple of Srila Prabhupada and has many years of experience teaching English at University level:

"As I look at Krishnakant's so-called analysis of this excerpt from the May 28th Conversation, I'm struck by how far he has to stretch to make his point. I don't think it's necessarily fruitful to perform the kind of analysis he tries to apply here. His assertion that 'in this case the pronoun cannot be he' seems overstated. In his paragraph 6, he also states unequivocally that 'a speaker cannot just introduce a pronoun that has no antecedent.' In fact, in conversation speakers do all sorts of things contrary to formal grammatical rules. This may be particularly so if English is not the speaker's first language. We heard Srila Prabhupada do this all the time on walks, in his room, and even in formal lectures in the temple. Examples are legion. I'm just amazed that devotees who had so much association with Srila Prabhupada would buy such an argument.

"There are many possible ways to read those two sentences. Either could be a fragment ('Who is initiating,' if not a question, is a fragment; 'His grand-disciple' would be a fragment.), but the meaning must come from the entire conversation, not from some imputed grammatical conventions imposed on a somewhat casual conversation (casual in the sense that he was at ease with his disciples, not that the subject was insignificant). I have some sympathy with many of ritvik proponents' practical and spiritual concerns regarding ISKCON's policies on gurus. However, as an English teacher, an editor, and a disciple of almost 30 years' standing, I find Krishnakant's whole exercise here somewhat foolish.

"I think the simplest, most straightforward reading of this is that the two utterances on that line may well be discrete thoughts. They are probably related, but not in the most direct of ways. We often heard in Srila Prabhupada's conversation that he would tease out an idea with fragments (we all do it). I think that may be what he's doing here. The entire exchange is not a paragon of clarity, with pronouns switching from singular to plural and back. The communication is not the clearest. Therefore, I think that Krishnakant presumes too in making a big case about inconsistency in number. This passage is rife with such inconsistency. I just don't think he can adequately support his argument with this.

"I think for anyone to interpret these things in the way Krishnakant pretends to, they would need more intimate knowledge of Srila Prabhupada's casual speech and/or some background in linguistics. I presume to make the readings here with some reservations. However, I have been listening to Srila Prabhupada daily for almost 29 years, and I have some academic training in linguistics (at least 4 courses, including psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics)." [end]



I don't think I need to add much to the opinions expressed above.

### 13) Authorship of July 9 letter

*As mentioned previously, the minutes cannot be offered as irrefutable evidence for what Srila Prabhupada intended or stated, since they were neither authored, checked or signed by him, (unlike the July 9th letter).*

Once again the author makes a deliberate misrepresentation of the facts. The July 9<sup>th</sup> letter was not authored by Srila Prabhupada but by his secretary Tamal Krishna Goswami.

### 14) Corroboration of the facts

Under the heading NON-CORROBORATION the author quotes me:

*First, we find written corroboration of the taped conversation in the official minutes book of the GBC:*

and then goes on to say:

*This assertion is totally false since a written statement can only 'corroborate' a taped conversation if the two are the same. As we have already mentioned, the words spoken on the tape are most definitely not the same as what is written in the so-called minutes book.*

The author seems to have penchant for making up the rules as he goes along. According to my version of the American Heritage dictionary the meaning of corroboration is as follows:

"To strengthen or support with other evidence; make more certain."

It says nothing about the two being exactly the same. Using this authorized criteria we can see that the written Minutes do in fact corroborate the spoken words of Srila Prabhupada by giving written support to the tape and the personal testimony of the GBC.

### 15) Legal acceptance of GBC dealings

The author quotes me as saying:

*Since the minutes book would be accepted by any court of law as official evidence of the dealings of the GBC body, there can be no doubt that the said conversation took place and that Srila Prabhupada did in fact state categorically that the disciples whom he would name would accept disciples of their own, who would be his grand disciples after his departure.*

He then comments:

*The author has asserted that anything which is evidence for the 'dealings of the GBC body' is also cast iron evidence for what Srila Prabhupada actually stated. This does not logically follow, nor would it be seen to logically follow in any court of law. Evidence for what the GBC thought occurred in the conversation is not evidence for what Srila Prabhupada actually stated. The two could coincide. But evidence for one is not ipso facto evidence for the other, unless Srila Prabhupada had checked and signed the above minutes, which he most certainly and emphatically did not. Had Srila Prabhupada signed these minutes our position would surely be much less tenable.*

At least the author admits that "the two could coincide." As far as logic goes, Srila Prabhupada was not speaking in a vacuum or to himself. He was having a conversation with the GBC. The conversation included statements by the GBC men. Their testimony as to what the conversation was about is as valuable as the other party involved, in this case Srila Prabhupada. In the absence of Srila Prabhupada, the testimony of the GBCs present at that meeting would indeed be accepted as evidence of what was said since they were the ones it was said to. The author's position is not tenable, but unfortunately he cannot accept this due to his inability to hear objectively from those that were actually there.

### 16) Telepathic Link:



At this point the author reduces his arguments to absurdity. He says:

*Without such signed documentation, the only way evidence for what the GBC body thought could be used to prove what Srila Prabhupada actually stated, would be if it could be irrefutably demonstrated that there existed an infallible telepathic link between Srila Prabhupada and the thoughts of the GBC at all times. The fact that Srila Prabhupada disbanded the GBC, at one time instructing everyone to ignore them, and that the GBC have themselves admitted to running an unauthorized zonal acharya system for nearly a decade, might make such a proposition hard to stick in a court of law.*

Since we can assume that the author himself does not have an "infallible telepathic link" with Srila Prabhupada, and judging by his arguments, very little of any other kind of understanding of Srila Prabhupada, there is no basis for accepting his mental speculations on the meaning of the May 28 conversation either. His very argument for dismissing the GBC applies also to himself.

And actually his statement is absurd. As I pointed out previously, the GBC were personally present with Srila Prabhupada and were in a position to establish at least a temporary physical and subtle link with him for understanding his desires; just as any two parties in discussion do.

The fact is that Srila Prabhupada obviously did mean something. He was responding to questions put to him by the GBC. He was satisfied that they had understood him. He signed a letter on July 9 confirming that he had said previously on May 28 that he would select some of his disciples to give first and second initiations. So Srila Prabhupada's statements are being reliably transmitted by the GBC. This is the simple fact.

As far as the attempt here goes to dredge up old events to try and discredit the GBC, the author is clearly clutching at straws. His method is "give a dog a bad name and hang it." He points to an incident where Srila Prabhupada temporarily suspended them. That was circa 1972 when they were just formed and new to the whole service. But he ignores the obvious that in 1977, at the same time when the May 28 conversation was held, Prabhupada had the same GBC draft a Will for him which stated that the GBC would be the ultimate managing authority for ISKCON. Srila Prabhupada did not share the author's sarcastic and negative feelings towards the GBC; rather the opposite.

As far as the zonal acharya system goes, yes, the GBC made mistakes in implementing the principle of giving initiations. And they also admitted that and moved to correct it. Such an admittance is a healthy sign, it is not a fault.

Whatever the mistakes the GBC may have made, the one mistake they have not made is to abandon Srila Prabhupada's first instruction in his Will that the GBC body is the managerial authority on which his Society stands. The attempts by individuals to usurp that authority have all met with failure due to adherence to this instruction. That's why we still have an ISKCON left.

#### 17) Going Back in Time:

*What makes the above assertion so shaky is not only the omission of minute 2) from the typed version, though this is certainly bad enough, but also the fact that this very notion of appointing gurus had already been completely rejected by the whole GBC in 1985/86.*

What makes the author's above assertion so shaky is his own omission in this discussion of the second half of the Minute: "The disciples they accept shall be their disciples and Srila Prabhupada will be their grand spiritual master." The author says the notion of "appointing gurus" was completely rejected. Again he overstates his case to avoid the core issue. "Appointment" of gurus was rejected, for the reasons pointed out by Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu at the beginning of this document, but the notion that Prabhupada's disciples should initiate disciples of their own does not go hand in hand with this and was not thrown out.

#### 18) Mindset

Not only is the author presumptuous in his understanding of the mind of Srila Prabhupada, his claims as to my mind-set are also way off the mark:

*As we mentioned at the beginning, the author is dredging up evidence which only supports the old zonal acharya system,*



*and which has itself been completely rejected and disbanded many years ago. Perhaps if we were all to put our watches and clocks back twenty years to the time when everyone blindly accepted the 'guru appointment' theory we might better understand the author's mind-set. Certainly the author was never more 'fired-up' as when he was actively and unquestioningly promoting a system everyone now accepts was completely unauthorized nonsense.*

First of all, I can state categorically that the author does not have an infallible telepathic link with me at all times: nor even part of the time. Neither has he had the opportunity to establish such a link even temporarily through direct contact.

Since the author seeks to question my own personal conduct I feel some justification in offering the reader some insights into my thinking of the time rather than have the author project that for me. If we put the clocks back twenty years we would find the author just out of diapers and barely conscious of the world around him what to speak of knowing anything about the complexities of ISKCON's spiritual and managerial methods. They say hindsight is always 20/20 but if the eye is jaundiced by arrogance then what one sees is not necessarily history but one's own version of it.

As far as my own history goes, I don't think the author has any right to speak about what my own outlook was and what my motivations were. He has never even met me. I was certainly never more 'fired-up' than when I was personally serving His Divine Grace prior to his departure. My involvement in GBC management from 1977 — 1984 was a decidedly mixed blessing for me. I did it because Srila Prabhupada personally asked me to. I was enthusiastic to execute my duties as best I could for the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada and no other reason. I was enthusiastic to support the GBC, both in practice and in principle, because I knew that's what Srila Prabhupada wanted. I had spent enough time with him to know that very clearly.

In my support of the "zonal guru system" as it came later to be called, I was enthusiastic more for the principle of the continuance of the parampara as I had heard it directly spoken to me by Srila Prabhupada, than for the application of it. When the GBC put the system of zonal gurus into place I went along with it with the same enthusiasm. I was present in 1976 when Srila Prabhupada spoke of his GBCs, who had their particular zones to manage, as being his successors:

**Interviewer:** What happens when that inevitable time comes a successor is needed. **Ramesvara:** He is asking about the future, who will guide the Movement in the future.

**Srila Prabhupada:** They will guide. I am training them.

**Interviewer:** Will there be one spiritual leader though?

**Srila Prabhupada:** No. I am training GBC, 18 all over the world.

(SP Interview, 6 June, 1976, Los Angeles)

**Interviewer:** I was wondering if he had a successor to do... Do you have a successor to take your place when you die?

**Prabhupada:** Not yet settled up. Not yet settled up.

**Interviewer:** So what process would the Hare Krsna...?

**Prabhupada:** We have got secretaries. They are managing.

**Ramesvara:** He has appointed from all the disciples a group of secretaries. Each one is in charge of a different sector of the world.

**Interviewer:** How many secretaries?

**Ramesvara:** Presently there is eighteen.

**Interviewer:** And so that group of eighteen secretaries will choose another leader?

**Prabhupada:** I am training each one of them as leader so that they can spread extensively. That is my idea.-- (July 14 1976 Interview with Time)

And in the July 9 letter Prabhupada spoke of people approaching "whichever representative is nearest." So it wasn't such a great leap of credulity, at least for me, to start off with a zonal concept centered around the first 11 men that Srila Prabhupada selected. That this was abused was as great a source of pain and frustration to me as it was to many others. Nevertheless, we were married to it by the time the cracks appeared, and at least in my zone, Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia, we had none of the troubles that America and other places were experiencing. Rather the opposite; we went through an unprecedented period of development and increase in every field during my tenure as GBC (1977-mid 84). With a united and enthusiastic set of leaders who worked hard to spread Krishna consciousness as far and wide as possible, we went from 3 temples to 17; the devotee population boomed from about 90 to over 350; BBT remittances went from under \$200,000 to \$1,300,000 annually; devotees were happy and enthusiastic. We set up two BBT divisions, four farms, a major



gurukula and numerous restaurants. My zone had natural geographic barriers so the zonal concept wasn't hard to accept. In our isolation "down under" and our experience of successful preaching, we could be perhaps forgiven for not immediately recognizing the problems elsewhere.

Even in America, where the problem was most acute, the leader of the guru reform movement, Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu says in his paper "Cleansing hearts....." that it wasn't until 1984 that he hit upon the essence of the problem and then worked out the solutions. So it wasn't so easy to see everything during that period. Of course, at around the same time, mid-1984, I had my own spiritual problems and resigned my duties as a sannyasi and GBC and played no further part in official ISKCON affairs, so I wasn't party to the changes that took place thereafter.

I readily admit that it wasn't until 1986 with the fall of Ramesvara and Bhagavan that I finally woke up to the need for extensive reform. But see it I did, and I accepted it wholeheartedly. But what I will never accept is the fallacy that sprung up around the same time that Srila Prabhupada never wanted his disciples to become gurus. I knew then, as I still know now, that misapplication does not cancel the principle.

#### 19) Point by Point rebuttal

*Whatever the author's current mind-set we are certainly not prepared to even contemplate modifying Srila Prabhupada's signed final order on initiations on the basis of an already discredited and uncorroborated 'understanding' of what Srila Prabhupada supposedly said on May 28th 1977. We have given a carefully considered analysis of what we think actually transpired on pages 21-26 of 'The Final Order'. If the author rejects our analysis we humbly suggest he offers a point for point rebuttal. This may be difficult for him, but not as challenging as building a time machine and transporting us all back to the glory days of the zonal acharyas.*

The author's statement of intransigence is regrettable, but has been par course so far for his modus operandi in never admitting to any possibility of a mistake in his prejudiced view, nor showing any willingness to accept the eye-witness, personally experienced accounts of what transpired on May 28.

The suggestion here that I am trying to transport anyone back to the "glory days" of the zonal acharya system is of course another of the author's red herrings. It is yet another attempt to bring discredit by false association. I have never suggested, nor will suggest, a return to the zonal acharya system.

Nor will I ever accept the author's apasampradayik concoction that a diseased Acharya continues to give diksa. It is not in any of Prabhupada's books, nor any teachings of any of our acharyas. The only basis the author has for this foolish claim is his misinterpretations of the 1977 May 28 conversation and the July 9 letter. As he says, his analysis is what he "thinks" happened in 1977. But what he thinks and the reality experienced by the devotees in attendance with Srila Prabhupada are two different things.

The author's claims are not difficult to rebut but only time consuming. When one has to deal with someone who cannot see things objectively but obsessively pushes an obscure argument that flies in the face of everything Srila Prabhupada ever said on the subject, it is never a pleasant task. There are much better things I could be doing with my time, like finishing the remaining volumes of my Diary series and getting on with the business of spreading Krsna consciousness. I am reminded of the example Srila Prabhupada used about the mundane wranglers who fought over a piece of torn paper. The one who argued that it was cut with scissors was eventually thrown into water and drown. But as he went down still he poked his two fingers up above the water, moving them like a pair of scissors. In the face of such fanaticism what can be done? Some people just cannot accept honest representation and the direct meanings of Srila Prabhupada's words. They are what Srila Prabhupada called "over-intelligent." The author is apparently one of them.

#### 20) July 9 letter

*If it is indeed the case that the July 9th letter is specifically referring back to the May 28th conversation, and not some other discussion, then the very fact that the letter does not advise the reader to listen to that conversation tape, or read a transcript of it, would clearly indicate that Srila Prabhupada considered the July 9th letter an accurate and complete summary of the conversation.*

Once again the author entertains us with his own version of what he thinks Srila Prabhupada considered. Again he makes up his own rules by which he thinks Srila Prabhupada should operate. "The very fact that the letter does not advise



the reader to listen to that conversation tape, or read a transcript of it," does NOT in any way "clearly indicate" that Srila Prabhupada considered the July 9<sup>th</sup> letter "an accurate and complete summary" of the conversation. Where does Srila Prabhupada say this? He does not say "this is my final statement on initiations in ISKCON," he does not say, "this letter supercedes everything I said on May 28," he does not say "this letter is my final order." The idea that the letter was a "final order" that superceded whatever else Srila Prabhupada had said five weeks before is a mythical creation of the author and his fellow ritvik proxy initiation propounders. But it was not Srila Prabhupada's.

The author wasn't there but he thinks he understands Srila Prabhupada's mind better than those that were and who were in a position to ask the necessary questions to get things clear. And clear they were. Srila Prabhupada wanted his disciples to initiate after his departure — "And Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, amara ajnaya guru hana. One can understand the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he can become guru. Or one who understands his guru's order, the same parampara, he can become guru. And therefore I shall select some of you." This was his final confirmation.

On July 7 he revealed what he wanted as far as continuing initiations during his own presence. The two are inextricably linked, the July 9 letter standing within the context of the May 28 conversation. On October 18 he stated categorically that he would not initiate anymore unless he got better. For the straight forward person these events are easy to understand. For the sophist they may provide grist for centuries of speculation and argumentation.

## 21) Confusing context?

The author apparently cannot understand the two types of context drawn by me in my comments on the Minutes: He says:

*The author then goes on to give his speculation as to what the July 9<sup>th</sup> letter really meant:*

*"This remaining question was thus resolved in the conversation Tamal Krishna Goswami had with His Divine Grace on July 7th, which was translated into the letter of July 9th. When we take the correct context it is clear that the conversation and letter was addressing the problem of the continuance of initiations while Srila Prabhupada was still present, with the understanding of what would happen after his disappearance having already been clearly established."*

*Please note that in the passage above the author is stating that the 'context' for the July 9th letter was the July 7th conversation, addressing only the problem of the 'continuance of initiations while Srila Prabhupada was still present'. However just a few lines earlier the author had stated:*

*"This opening statement establishes without a doubt that the appointment of the 11 rtviks stood within the context of the previously established desire of His Divine Grace on May 28 that his disciples would accept disciples of their own after his departure."*

*Above the author states that the 'context' of the July 9th letter was the matter of initiations for when Srila Prabhupada was not present. Thus the author has clearly contradicted himself.*

For one who prides himself on his knowledge of English and analytical abilities, its surprising that he cannot understand there are two contexts at work here. The July 9 letter was derived from the immediate context of the conversation on July 7. The May 28 conversation provided an overall context in which the subsequent conversation and letter of July 7-9 sit.

There is no contradiction, it simply requires a little brain substance to follow the argument.

The author goes on to say:

*And this is only to be expected, for, as we pointed out in our replies to other GBC papers:*

*How can a conversation held on May 28th, that the GBC claims deals only with what to do after Srila Prabhupada leaves the planet, making no reference to proxies, be legitimately used to modify a letter that the GBC claims deals only with proxies, and only with what was to be done before Srila Prabhupada left?*

The May 28 conversation does not deal exclusively with the questions of initiations after Prabhupada's departure,



but particularly with that. Both scenarios come up; after Prabhupada's departure and during his presence. In Satsvarupa Maharaja's opening question he states: "Then our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you're no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiation would be conducted."

After Prabhupada says he will recommend some of his disciples, Satsvarupa asks what is the relationship of the initiator to the person being initiated. Prabhupada replies "He's guru. He's guru." Then Satsvarupa says, "But he does it on your behalf."

Prabhupada replies "Yes. That is formality. Because in my presence one should not become guru, so on my behalf, on my order... Amara ajnaya guru hana. Be actually guru, but by my order."

Here we see that Srila Prabhupada is thinking of both scenarios. The question was particularly about after his departure but Prabhupada mentions about "in my presence" also. After this though there is no further discussion on the present, only about the future with Srila Prabhupada stating that the new initiates will be "grand-disciples" and "disciples of my disciple."

The consideration of the present is taken up five weeks later with Tamal Krishna Goswami approaching Srila Prabhupada on July 7:

**Tamal Krishna:** Srila Prabhupada? We're receiving a number of letters now, and these are people who want to get initiated. So up until now, since your becoming ill, we asked them to wait.

**Prabhupada:** The local, mean, senior sannyasis can do that.

**Tamal Krsna:** That's what we were doing... I mean, formerly we were... The local GBC, sannyasis, were chanting on their beads, and they were writing to Your Divine Grace, and you were giving a spiritual name. So should that process be resumed, or should we...? I mean one thing is that it's said that the spiritual master takes on the... You know, he takes on the... He has to cleanse the disciple by... So we don't want that you should have to... Your health is not so good, so that should not be... That's why we've been asking everybody to wait. I just want to know if we should continue to wait some more time.

**Prabhupada:** No, the senior sannyasis..."

Srila Prabhupada then gives the first nine names. Consequently, on July 9, he counter-signed a letter written by his secretary which begins by referencing the May 28 meeting:

"Recently when all of the GBC members were with His Divine Grace in Vrndavana, Srila Prabhupada indicated that soon He would appoint some of His senior disciples to act as "ritvik - representative of the acharya, for the purpose of performing initiations, both first initiation and second initiation."

So the link between the two is there, Prabhupada on May 28 having stated he would select some men to be gurus for the future after his disappearance, but at the same time saying they couldn't be gurus in his presence due to etiquette; and then responding on July 7 to the current situation by giving the names, indicating they were to start initiating immediately, but upholding the etiquette that they could not be gurus in his presence by stating that the people they initiate would still be his disciples.

*The author has tried to solve this conundrum by stating that the context for the July 9th letter is simultaneously what should be done whilst Srila Prabhupada is present, and what should be done when he is not present! Anyone can see this is an absurd position to take, and certainly impossible to defend.*

Obviously the author has gotten himself confused because that is not what I said. I indicated two contexts, a greater one established on May 28, extending to beyond Prabhupada's disappearance, and an immediate one on July 7 dealing with the present concerns. I assumed that this was clear, but apparently every little detail has to be spelled out. This is the problem with nit-picking — the intelligence becomes bewildered and one loses the bigger picture.

## 22) ... Simple and straightforward

The author then expresses his astonishment at my statement that "it does not require anything other a simple, straightforward reading of these conversations to understand this."



He says:

*We would be very interested to know which 'straightforward' reading of which 'conversation' leads to the conclusion that the 11 rtviks named on July 9<sup>th</sup> were to magically metamorphose into 11 fully-fledged Diksa Gurus the very second Srila Prabhupada left his body. Please show us these clear words and sentences explicitly stating that the M.A.S.S., was to occur immediately on Srila Prabhupada's departure. The only words the author has given us in his paper are those jotted down by an inefficient GBC secretary who caused the GBC to wrongly conclude that Srila Prabhupada had 'appointed' 11 zonal diksa gurus.*

As I have shown throughout this paper the GBC Minutes are not the only words on which Srila Prabhupada's disciples accepted the responsibility of giving initiations after His Divine Grace's departure. Eleven years of preaching and a final confirmation on May 28 were the basis as well as a centuries' old tradition, thoroughly and repeatedly explained in Srila Prabhupada's books. On the other hand the rtviks cannot show any evidence for their proxy initiation theory other than a single letter, which they take out of context.

The repeated attempts of the author to mix this timeless principle of guru parampara with the "zonal" application and act as if they are one and the same thing is the basic defect in his argument. Hopefully the readers of this document can understand better the difference.

*This terrible mistake drove away countless sincere souls and took nearly an entire decade to 'rectify'. We wonder if the author has ever fully confronted the role he himself played in that ghastly fiasco.*

As I briefly mentioned earlier about my role, and I think as my history shows and as anyone that knows me will testify, I have been trying to fully confront the many aspects of my spiritual life and its defects. I guess that's why I am still around. Shameless I may be, but I fully intend to continue with this process. I have no doubts that some of my difficulties in spiritual life were due to offenses committed during the zonal acharya days. I have humbly apologized to the devotees in my former zone for whatever offenses I committed, knowingly or unknowingly and I am happy to have the opportunity to do so again to anyone who still feels offended. Such opportunities are for my own purification and I accept them gladly.

I can't speak for the other leaders who had problems, big or small. But I can say that all of them rendered real service to Srila Prabhupada to the point that he recognized them. To earn that recognition is not a small thing. That some of them faltered along the way and committed offences against their god-brothers and god-sisters is in one sense hardly surprising, although disappointing and distressing. I think all of us realize it is not possible in this world to go through it without committing some kind of offense, great or small. My only respite is my dedication to understanding the desire of my lord and master, Srila Prabhupada, and somehow sticking to his lotus feet, come what may. On the way I humbly beg for the forgiveness and mercy of all the Vaisnavas so that I can continue to serve our beloved spiritual master.

At least in one respect the desire of Srila Prabhupada was made very clear to me by His Divine Grace himself:

**March 7, 1976, Mayapur**

"Srila Prabhupada surprised me when I entered his room at about 11 a.m. this morning to prepare for his massage. For almost half an hour he preached to me, explaining that he wants all his disciples to become gurus. Each of us is to make thousands of disciples just as he has and in this way spread Krsna consciousness all over the world.

"He didn't seem to be speaking in general terms either but directly to me. He seemed very enlivened at the prospect of spreading Krsna consciousness in this way.

"In the evening, when the GBC men filed into his room to make their report about their day's meeting, he brought up the same topic, before discussing their resolutions. He asked me to explain to everyone what he had said earlier. But when I hesitated, he did it himself, repeating in brief this principle of becoming guru.

"He told them that just as he had made thousands of disciples he wants each one of them to make ten thousand each. He encouraged them to become increasingly more qualified and rise to the position of being spiritual masters. He stressed that this can be done only if they maintain spiritual strength by strictly following the four regulative principles and chanting the prescribed number of rounds.

"It is all dependant on enthusiasm, he told us. At seventy years he had left Vrindavana with no money, men, or any facility. He did everything only on this principle of enthusiasm. Without directly saying it, Srila Prabhupada made it clear that all internal arguments and disputes can be resolved by turning our attention to the higher ideal of preaching Krsna consciousness to the world."



— (A Transcendental Diary Volume I)

I hope that one day I will become spiritually fit enough to fulfill his desire and, as he said to Tusta Krsna in 1975, make him happy by spreading his movement in the prescribed way.

23) Consistency

The author brings his epistle to a close with the final point:

*Please note that in Disciple of My Disciple, the GBC clearly state that the order for guru-ship was made on May 28th itself, and that NO APPOINTMENT took place. The GBC minutes book states that on May 28th only the FUTURE establishment of guru-ship was mentioned, and further, that guru-ship was to be brought about by an APPOINTMENT:*

*"Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiations in the future, even after his departure." (GBC minutes book)*

*Thus we have a clear contradiction between the author and the very body he is supposedly defending. And this on the most fundamental issue of how Srila Prabhupada supposedly authorized his disciples to initiate after his physical departure. It is clear the GBC and their supporters are in complete confusion and disarray over this whole matter. We suggest it would be much simpler for everyone if we all just accept the July 9th order as Srila Prabhupada's final word on the issue. Who could possibly object to that?*

As I have consistently pointed out, the use of one word, "appoint" does not affect the underlying principle, that Srila Prabhupada wanted his disciples to become regular gurus, having disciples of their own. There is no confusion and disarray over this point amongst the GBC. The suggestion that there is simply wishful thinking on the part of the author.

What is objectionable is attempts to cleverly manipulate His Divine Grace's words to mean the opposite of what he intended and make the false assertion that he did not want his disciples to initiate. The GBC's position does not stand only on the GBC Minutes book, but the GBC Minutes book stands as a written record of Srila Prabhupada's stated desire (with the possible exception of the word "appoint") when he was asked for a final confirmation of how initiations would go on particularly at that time when he would no longer be with us.

When Prabhupada finished the conversation on this topic he said "One can understand the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he can become guru. Or one who understands his guru's order, the same parampara, he can become guru. And therefore I shall select some of you."— who could possibly object to that?

24) Summary:

The author closes with a rather arrogant pronouncement:

*This has to be the most pitiable attempt so far at providing evidence in support of modifications A & B as given in the 'Final Order'. The author has been forced to put forward the GBC's original misunderstanding that led to the establishment of a guru system which everyone had rejected as bogus over 10 years ago. If the GBC and their sympathizers have no evidence it would be far more dignified to just admit the fact. It really will not help them to just present previously discredited speculations.*

*The author has also added in, for good measure, the usual mixture of contradictions, misrepresentations, and unsupported speculations which VNN readers will know are par for the course with all GBC inspired attacks on 'The Final Order'.*

It appears the author is so self-possessed that he thinks everything revolves around his own particular view of the events of 1977 and his "modifications." They do not. To present the words and intent of Srila Prabhupada in a direct and honest way is far from pitiable. It is rather, a pity that some present themselves as authorities on Srila Prabhupada's words and desires simply on the basis of material intelligence, sophistry, word-jugglery and a very evident and abiding contempt for senior devotees that have sincerely served Srila Prabhupada and his mission for up to 32 years, beginning before the



author was even born. Even with the title of his reply the author subtly misrepresents the truth. The Minutes are of course the GBCs' and not mine. Although this seems a small point, it typifies the modus operandi of the author as we have seen by examining his text.

Mockery, innuendo, false logic, misrepresentation, partial quoting, red herrings, sarcasm and insults are poor methods on which to establish the desire of Srila Prabhupada. They do not represent him, neither do I find that the author's writing invokes the spirit or intent of His Divine Grace at any stage.

*Maybe this sad attempt to re-present previously discarded evidence is a sign that the GBC and it's apologists have finally run out of steam. Certainly they must be desperate if they think devotees are willing to go back in time to the old 'guru appointment' mythology of twenty years ago.*

Again the author expresses more wishful thinking. Timeless orders never run out but occasionally they can be obscured by misrepresentation. Nobody has or is suggesting a return to the mistakes of 20 years ago. There is clearly a need for on-going reform or refinement of our guru system. ISKCON is a work in progress, a grand experiment the likes of which have not been seen before in the history of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. To satisfy the needs of a huge international institution and those of the individuals that comprise it is no easy task. Its going to take some time before we get it right, especially in the turbulent times we currently live in.

At the same time we cannot throw out the essential teachings of His Divine Grace simply because of mistakes made in executing his order or the unfortunate weaknesses of some individual leaders. Neither can we do so on the basis of philosophically deviant ideas. Srila Prabhupada was not a word wrangler, nor did he speak in riddles that could only be unraveled years and years later by a clever sophist. The Srila Prabhupada we knew and loved was straight forward and consistent. Had he desired to change the entire parampara system with something new, he would certainly have let us know through more than one small letter that was not even authored by him. To suggest that he would shows a complete lack of understanding of His character and qualities.

The GBC Minutes, the tape of the May 28 conversation, the testimony of the individuals that shared the conversation with Srila Prabhupada are, altogether, the evidence that Srila Prabhupada gave a final confirmation that he wanted a timeless tradition that he had consistently presented and supported from the beginning to the end of his preaching work to go on. This has never been discarded by the GBC and hopefully in centuries to come, never will be.

Your humble servant,

Hari-sauri dasa



# "DISCIPLE OF MY DISCIPLE"

An Analysis of the Conversation of May 28, 1977

by (in alphabetical order):

Badrinarayan Dasa

Giridhari Swami

Umapati Swami

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## FOREWORD

The following paper deals only with the question, "What were Srila Prabhupada's instructions on continuing initiations after his physical departure?" Srila Prabhupada answered this question in the conversation of May 28th, 1977, with additions in the garden conversation of July 8th and the letter of July 9th. The present paper does not deal with the many subsequent concerns, which will be addressed in an upcoming book on the entire ISKCON guru issue, both past and present.

There is also some controversy over Srila Prabhupada's desire concerning initiations during his presence. Some say that the May 28th conversation indicated that Srila Prabhupada would appoint proxies; others say that Srila Prabhupada intended to name devotees who would act as full-fledged gurus even during his presence. The present paper, however, deals only with Srila Prabhupada's order concerning initiations after his disappearance. That, in fact, is the reason for this paper: to show that Srila Prabhupada unequivocally stated that after his departure his disciples should take up the responsibilities of full-fledged initiating spiritual masters.

## PREFACE

The devotees commonly known as "ritvik adherents" will be referred to in this paper as "proxy-initiation adherents." The English word "proxy" has been chosen over the Sanskrit "ritvik" for reasons that will become obvious as the paper progresses. There has been some objection to the word "proxy" on the grounds that it is pejorative, but the word simply means "authorized agent" and has no pejorative connotations either in the dictionary or in common usage (proxy vote, proxy wedding). The term "proxy-initiation" refers to the philosophical position of the proxy-initiation adherents that all initiations performed in ISKCON are proxy initiations and that Srila Prabhupada is the only initiator.

The term "pre-samadhi" refers to the time of Srila Prabhupada's physical presence in this world, and "post-samadhi" refers to the period after his departure. The term "Controversy Paper" refers to an undated paper put out by the proxy-initiation adherents. Their paper is called "The Controversy Surrounding Srila Prabhupada's Final Order on the Future of Initiations Within ISKCON." The term "Controversy Paper" is a shortening of the title for convenience.

## PART I

### The Controversy

The controversy revolves around two questions: What was Srila Prabhupada's final order concerning initiations after his departure? and, Why has ISKCON had trouble implementing the order? The present paper deals only with the first question: What was Srila Prabhupada's final order?

Logically, we should first know Srila Prabhupada's order and then deal with the problems. But the proxy-initiation adherents have fallen into the trap of backward thinking: first looking at the problems and then trying to ascertain, through reverse



logic, what they think Srila Prabhupada should have wanted. They point to the problems of some ISKCON spiritual masters and then say that Srila Prabhupada's order was misunderstood. The problems, they say, prove that Srila Prabhupada did not want his disciples to initiate.

In other words, they say that the falldowns of some of the new gurus prove that Srila Prabhupada's disciples are not qualified to initiate, at least not yet. Srila Prabhupada is perfect and cannot set up an imperfect system. The proxy-initiation adherents say that the falldowns of the gurus prove that the present system in ISKCON is imperfect and cannot be what Srila Prabhupada wanted.

But difficulty in applying an order does not prove that the order was never given. People have also had problems with other orders given by Srila Prabhupada. Sannyasis have given up their vows. Marriages arranged by Srila Prabhupada have ended in divorce. Gurukula teachers have failed in their jobs. But these examples do not prove that Srila Prabhupada never gave those orders or that the orders were imperfect. In the same way, the failures of certain gurus do not prove that Srila Prabhupada never gave his disciples the order to initiate.

If difficulty in applying an order proves that the order was never given, what can be said about the difficulty the proxy-initiation adherents have had in applying what they themselves consider to be Srila Prabhupada's order: that all new disciples will be the direct disciples of Srila Prabhupada? They have not been able to implement this order within ISKCON at all. By their own logic, this would prove that Srila Prabhupada never gave such an order.

One must separate the two questions: What was Srila Prabhupada's order? and Why has ISKCON had so much trouble implementing it? The present paper deals only with the first question: Srila Prabhupada's order. Of course, no one can ignore the problems--the cheating, the fallen gurus, the devastated disciples-- and these will be taken up in separate papers. But first things first.

The present paper will show that on May 28th, 1977, Srila Prabhupada ordered his disciples to become initiating spiritual masters. The proxy-initiation adherents, however, say that the words Srila Prabhupada spoke on that day have little importance and that Srila Prabhupada's order is stated only in a letter of July 9, 1977. Their Controversy Paper says:

*"One interesting point to note is that neither the July 9th order nor any subsequent document signed by Srila Prabhupada ever refers back to the above conversation [the May 28th conversation]. This is quite peculiar since the central argument of the GBC is that this brief exchange of words is absolutely crucial to the proper understanding of the July 9th order. Was this the normal way in which Srila Prabhupada issued instructions, ie, releasing incomplete and misleading written directives which could only be properly understood by rummaging through old taped conversations?"*

"Old taped conversations"? If Srila Prabhupada's words are worth no more than old tapes, why have devotees bothered to transcribe these conversations for the Folio? One could just as easily say that Bhagavad-gita is some old book. It seems that the proxy-initiation adherents are dismissing the words of their spiritual master as some old relic hardly worth listening to.

In fact, it was Srila Prabhupada who arranged the conversation. He had called in the GBC members from all over the world so they could ask any last questions before he departed. The atmosphere was formal and serious. The conversation was taped for future reference, and the results of the conversation were recorded in the official GBC minutes book, with all the GBCs present signing as witnesses. Still, the proxy-initiation adherents say that the May 28th conversation has little relevance and that the word "henceforward" in the following passage of the July 9th letter proves that Srila Prabhupada intended to be the only initiating guru after his departure.

*"In the past Temple Presidents have written to Srila Prabhupada recommending a particular devotee's initiation. Now that Srila Prabhupada has named these representatives, Temple Presidents may henceforward send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple."*

The proxy-initiation adherents also maintain that the July 9th letter stands on its own without any reference to anything that was ever said previously. The Controversy Paper says:

*"Was this the normal way in which Srila Prabhupada issued instructions, ie, releasing incomplete and misleading written directives which could only be properly understood by rummaging through old taped conversations?"*

The GBCs do not think the July 9th letter is incomplete or misleading, nor do they think that Srila Prabhupada's words are



just "old taped conversations." Would anyone say that the July 9th letter is an old piece of paper? True, the July 9th letter was published, but the May 28th conversation was recorded to be published if need be. There is a link between the July 9th letter and the May 28th conversation. The July 9th letter, issued through the GBC, is a follow-up to the May 28th conversation, as the present paper will show, and deals only with the question of how to initiate during the last days of Srila Prabhupada's presence.

But it was not "the normal way in which Srila Prabhupada issued instructions" to change what he had been saying for twelve years about disciplic succession by inserting one adverb ("henceforward") in a sentence. Srila Prabhupada wanted his disciples to read what he wrote and listen to what he said, and he assumed that they would look at any new developments in the light of what had gone before. What teacher would not want that? Therefore, saying that the July 9th letter must be understood with no link to past conversations goes against Srila Prabhupada's normal way. The July 9th letter does not stand on its own any more than the eighteenth chapter of Bhagavad-gita stands on its own: one must first understand the previous seventeen.

In another sense the July 9th letter does stand on its own. It is a clearly worded letter stating procedures to be followed at a certain time. But the proxy-initiation adherents have imposed their own definition on the word "henceforward," and it has thus become necessary to look at the letter in historical perspective and to look at the word "henceforward" in the standard dictionaries and in Srila Prabhupada's other letters and conversations. This topic will be dealt with in another section of the present paper.

The July 9th letter is a temporary order, written by Tamal Krishna Maharaja and signed by Srila Prabhupada. It is based on a conversation between Srila Prabhupada and Tamal Krishna Maharaja held in a garden on July 8, 1977. A transcript of the conversation is included as an appendix to the present paper. The May 28th conversation is the final order about continuing the disciplic succession, spoken directly by Srila Prabhupada.

## PART 2

### THE MAY 28TH CONVERSATION

The conversation:

**Satsvarupa:** Then our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you're no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiation would be conducted.

ANALYSIS:

Satsvarupa Maharaja's question can be taken as either one question or two. There is no doubt that the question concerns initiations after the departure of Srila Prabhupada, but it is not certain whether the question also includes the subject of initiations during Srila Prabhupada's presence. In either case, the main concern is initiations after the departure of Srila Prabhupada. Therefore Satsvarupa Maharaja says "particularly."

The hesitant wording shows that Satsvarupa Maharaja is uneasy about bringing up the subject of Srila Prabhupada's departure. The devotees were hoping against hope that Srila Prabhupada would recover, and they did not like to contemplate the idea that he might be leaving.

Satsvarupa Maharaja says, "our next question" because this question was one of a list of questions that the GBC had brought before Srila Prabhupada at Srila Prabhupada's request.

\*\*\*\*\*

The May 28th conversation continues:

**Prabhupada:** Yes. I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up, I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating acaryās.

ANALYSIS:



What is an "officiating acarya"? An officiating acarya must be a certain kind of acarya: an acarya who officiates. But he is an acarya. Srila Prabhupada does not say "priest" or "proxy." He says "acarya." (The meaning of "officiate" will be taken up later.)

The word "recommend" is also important. Srila Prabhupada is not appointing acaryas. The initiations must continue, and this can only be done through Srila Prabhupada's disciples. There is no appointment of gurus or successors, only a recommendation that certain disciples start the natural process. But a recommendation from the spiritual master is as good as an order, and the recommendation of certain devotees in the July 9th letter is a follow-up to the order that Srila Prabhupada's disciples should take up the work of spiritual master after his departure.

Srila Prabhupada is promising to do something. He will do it in the July 9th letter, and one of the people that Srila Prabhupada is now speaking to will write that letter. How, then, can the proxy-initiation adherents say that the July 9th letter can be understood only without reference to this conversation? Rather, the July 9th letter begins the process Srila Prabhupada is describing here.

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The May 28th conversation continues:

**Tamala Krsna: Is that called ritvik-acarya?**

**Prabhupada: Ritvik, yes.**

#### ANALYSIS:

The term "ritvik acarya" is brought in here by Tamala Krsna Maharaja. The word "ritvik" plays a large part in the arguments of the proxy-initiation adherents, but their definition of the word is false. The Controversy Paper says:

*"Ritviks, by definition, are not the initiators."*

The definition of "ritvik" in the Sanskrit dictionaries and in Srila Prabhupada's books is not "proxy" or "non-initiator" or anything of the sort. The definition of "ritvik" is simply "priest," and a look at Srila Prabhupada's books will show "ritvik" defined as "priest," or something similar, again and again. In fact, in the next passage Srila Prabhupada will say that the person called "ritvik" is the guru. Thus, Srila Prabhupada does not give any weight to the idea that "ritvik" means "proxy." Many times Srila Prabhupada himself performed the fire sacrifice, and on those occasions, Srila Prabhupada acted both as ritvik (officiating priest) and as initiating guru but not as proxy.

Of course, a priest, may act as a proxy at times like anyone else, and in a later conversation Srila Prabhupada directs Hansadutta to act as a proxy ritvik. But one cannot disregard all the other examples of Srila Prabhupada's use of the word and say that ritvik can be used only in this sense. In the present conversation, Srila Prabhupada does not refer to proxy initiations at all, not even in connection with the word "ritvik." (The Sanskrit-dictionary definition of "ritvik" and some examples of Srila Prabhupada's usage of the word are included as an appendix to the present paper.)

Tamala Krsna Maharaja, however, does seem to think that "ritvik" means "proxy," and his question shows that the GBCs were ready to accept whatever Srila Prabhupada said, even if he told them to become proxies after his leaving. In fact, it is they, not Srila Prabhupada, who bring up the idea of proxy initiation. This refutes the charge that those devotees who accepted the responsibility of guru were eagerly waiting in the wings or usurped the position.

The proxy-initiation adherents say that Srila Prabhupada should stop speaking at this point, although he does not. The Controversy Paper says:

*"Sometimes people have argued that the full answer is only properly revealed, piecemeal as it were, throughout the rest of the conversation. The problem with that proposition is that, in issuing instructions like this, Srila Prabhupada would only correctly answer the original question posed by Satsvarupa Maharaja if the following conditions were satisfied.*

*"a) That somebody took it upon themselves (sic) to ask more questions. &*

*"b) That by sheer serendipity they would happen upon the right questions to get the proper answer to Satsvarupa's original question."*

In other words, the proxy-initiation adherents say that the conversation continues because the GBCs are trying to prompt



Srila Prabhupada into giving them the answer they want. But Tamal Krishna Maharaja has already shown the willingness of the GBCs to accept any answer Srila Prabhupada gave.

The questions continue because the disciples want clarification of their guru's words. And at the end of the discussion, when the GBCs are ready to move on to another topic, Srila Prabhupada himself continues the discussion, offering final and definitive statements on this question.

The Controversy Paper says that something is wrong if "the full answer is only properly revealed, piecemeal as it were, throughout the rest of the conversation." But how else is knowledge revealed? Is everything revealed in Bhagavad-gita 2.11? Or is "the full answer ... only properly revealed, piecemeal as it were, throughout the rest of the conversation"? Indeed, it is the duty of the disciple to ask the guru for clarification, and no one can blame him. The proxy-initiation adherents thus go against Srila Prabhupada's teachings: "Not only should one hear submissively from the spiritual master, but one must also get a clear understanding from him, in submission and service and inquiries." (BG 4.34, purport)

How casually the proxy-initiation adherents play with the words of Srila Prabhupada! They say that the word "henceforward" in the July 9th letter is of the utmost importance but the words of this conversation should never have been spoken, or are at best an "old taped conversation."

Srila Prabhupada condemned such picking and choosing of the words one likes and dislikes. Srila Prabhupada's words are the same as scripture, and to reject this conversation is the same as rejecting a chapter of Bhagavad-gita.

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The May 28th conversation continues:

**Satsvarupa:** Then what is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and the...

**Prabhupada:** He's guru. He's guru.

#### ANALYSIS:

The Controversy Paper says:

*"Sometimes the curious theory is put forward that when Srila Prabhupada says 'he is guru,' he is really talking about the ritviks themselves. This is clearly absurd since Srila Prabhupada has only just defined the word ritvik as 'officiating acarya.' Literally a priest who conducts some type of religious or ceremonial function."*

The word "acarya" does not mean "priest," so "officiating acarya" cannot literally mean "officiating priest." Nor is the word "officiate" limited to the meaning of performing a ceremony. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, "officiate" can also mean "to perform the duties and functions of an office or a position of authority." Literally speaking, then, "officiating acarya" can only mean "someone who performs the functions of an acarya."

The Controversy Paper mentions the word "ritvik" here, so let us see what the conversation would look like if "ritvik" were the same as "proxy." The conversation would run like this:

*"Tamala Krsna: Is that called proxy-acarya?"*

*"Prabhupada: Proxy, yes."*

*"Satsvarupa: Then what is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and the..."*

*"Prabhupada: He's guru. He's guru."*

In this case, the conversation would make no sense. How can the proxy be the guru? One may say, of course, that the proxy and the person who gives the initiation are not the same, but Satsvarupa Maharaja is referring to them as the same person. The proxy-initiation adherents would have to say, then, that Srila Prabhupada either is not answering the question or does not understand it.

The Controversy Paper thus suggests a contradiction-- the proxy would be the guru-- but tries to save itself by giving Srila Prabhupada a habit he did not have: The paper says that when Srila Prabhupada uses the word "he," he is talking about himself (and to think otherwise is "clearly absurd").



The paper says:

*"When discussing philosophical or managerial issues surrounding his position as acarya, Srila Prabhupada would invariably refer to himself in the third person."*

The proxy-initiation adherents are saying here that when Srila Prabhupada would speak of himself, he would not say "I," as other people do, but would say "he," and that this was his invariable way of speaking. In other words, they say that when Srila Prabhupada would want to say "I am your guru," he would invariably say, "He is your guru," and leave the bewildered disciple to guess what he meant.

But Srila Prabhupada spoke in such a way rarely if at all. When he spoke about the spiritual master in general, he would use the third person, and when he spoke about himself, he would use the first person, the same as everyone else. One has only to look through Srila Prabhupada's letters and conversations on the Folio for proof. Thus the proxy-initiation adherents say that Srila Prabhupada spoke clearly and directly about important issues (we all agree), but go on to say that when Srila Prabhupada says "he," he means "I."

But their argument is too easy. They take any word they want, give it any meaning they want, and make Srila Prabhupada appear to say anything they want. So "he" means "I." Why not "black" means "white"? How about, "When Srila Prabhupada says 'Krishna,' he means 'Darwin' "? Who can say where it would end?

In fact, Srila Prabhupada uses the word "I" to refer to himself in this very conversation, so according to the proxy-initiation adherents' theory, Srila Prabhupada would sometimes say "I" and sometimes "he" when speaking of himself, even at the same time. If the proxy-initiation adherents think Srila Prabhupada's use of language is so imprecise and confusing, how can they attach so much importance to one single word in the July 9th letter?

To further test the proxy-initiation adherents' premise, let us take this segment of the conversation and substitute "I" for "he," as well as "proxy" for "acarya":

*"Tamala Krsna: Is that called proxy-acarya?"*

*"Prabhupada: Proxy, yes."*

*"Satsvarupa: Then what is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and the..."*

*"Prabhupada: I'm guru. I'm guru."*

It would seem, then, that Srila Prabhupada is not answering the question at all. He would simply be declaring himself guru and giving no information about "that person who gives the initiation." The proxy-initiation adherents may argue that the "person who gives the initiation" is really Srila Prabhupada, but then Srila Prabhupada would simply be saying that he is the guru of the people he initiates, something Satsvarupa Maharaja already knows.

When Satsvarupa Maharaja says "that person who gives the initiation," he is speaking not about Srila Prabhupada but about the person who will perform the ceremony or take charge of the new disciple after Srila Prabhupada's departure. That is the whole point of the conversation. Are we to think that Srila Prabhupada does not understand what anyone is talking about here?

Srila Prabhupada did not call the GBCs to his side just to tell them that he is the guru of the people he initiates. He called them in to answer their questions about what to do after his departure. The proxy-initiation adherents' version that Srila Prabhupada says "he" when he means "I" turns the conversation into nonsense. This point will become more obvious later on. On the other hand, Srila Prabhupada's words—"He's guru"—literally say that his disciples will be gurus after his departure.

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The May 28th conversation continues:

**Satsvarupa:** But he does it on your behalf.

**Prabhupada:** Yes. That is formality. Because in my presence one should not become guru, so on my behalf, on my



order... Amara ajnaya guru hana. Be actually guru, but by my order.

#### ANALYSIS:

Satsvarupa Maharaja says, "on your behalf," again suggesting the possibility of proxy initiation and the willingness of the GBCs to accept whatever Srila Prabhupada would say. Satsvarupa Maharaja is certainly not prompting Srila Prabhupada or trying to trick Srila Prabhupada into giving one answer or another. But Srila Prabhupada answers here that "on my behalf" does not mean acting as a post-samadhi proxy but means becoming an actual guru. And in the garden conversation of July 8th, 1977, Srila Prabhupada says that proxy initiation is a formality to be observed during his presence:

*"Tamala Krsna: So if someone gives initiation, like Harikesa Maharaja, he should send the person's name to us here and I'll enter it in the book. Okay. Is there someone else in India that you want to do this?"*  
*Prabhupada: India, I am here."*

The statement "India, I am here" shows that Srila Prabhupada is talking about a system for use during his physical presence. One may argue that there is no order for the disciples to stop the proxy initiation and become initiating gurus after Srila Prabhupada's departure, but that order had already been given on May 28. In other words, in the May 28th conversation Srila Prabhupada orders his disciples to take up the work of initiating guru, and in the July 9th letter, based on the July 8th garden conversation, Srila Prabhupada describes proxy initiation as a system to be followed during his physical presence.

When Srila Prabhupada says, "on my behalf, on my order..." the proxy-initiation adherents say that he is speaking of an order to come in the future, that if this statement itself were the order, then Srila Prabhupada would have said something like, "Now I am giving the order."

Why?

"Be guru, but by my order" is in the present tense, with no indication of future. The "but" does not indicate future, since "but" can be used in any tense: "I am a guru, but only by the order of Srila Prabhupada," or "I became a guru, but only by the order of Srila Prabhupada." It is unreasonable to impose an idea of future tense on a statement that is in the present. When Lord Caitanya said, "On My order, become a spiritual master," He did not have to repeat Himself and say, "Now I am giving the order." The words "on My order" themselves point to the order.

Here, Srila Prabhupada says "on my order" as a clarification of "on my behalf."

*"So on my behalf, on my order... Amara ajnaya guru hana. Be actually guru, but by my order."*

One becomes a spiritual master on behalf of his own spiritual master, on the order of his spiritual master, carrying on the disciplic succession. Srila Prabhupada is telling his disciples to become spiritual masters, but as his servant, in the same way that Srila Prabhupada himself became a spiritual master on behalf of His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur.

Srila Prabhupada says, "In my presence one should not become guru." Some may argue that because Srila Prabhupada is present in his books, the order is that no one may initiate for ten thousand years. But Satsvarupa Maharaja's opening question says, "initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you're no longer with us." Satsvarupa Maharaja is clearly talking about Srila Prabhupada's physical presence. If Srila Prabhupada's answer "in my presence" is about the presence of his books, Srila Prabhupada is either ignoring the question or playing a trick on the GBC, two unlikely possibilities.

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The May 28th conversation continues:

**Satsvarupa:** So they may also be considered your disciples.

**Prabhupada:** Yes, they are disciples. Why consider? Who?

#### ANALYSIS:

Satsvarupa Maharaja again suggests the possibility of proxy initiation. Srila Prabhupada could say yes, but he does not. On



the contrary, Srila Prabhupada suggests that the question does not make sense. Therefore, Tamal Krishna Maharaja will ask for clarification.

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The May 28th conversation continues:

**Tamala Krsna:** No, he's asking that these ritvik-acaryas, they're officiating, giving diksa. Their... The people who they give diksa to, whose disciple are they?

**Prabhupada:** They're his disciple.

**Tamala Krsna:** They're his disciple.

**Prabhupada:** Who is initiating. He is granddisciple.

#### ANALYSIS:

Again, Srila Prabhupada does not take the word "ritvik" to mean "proxy." In fact, the word "ritvik" seems to have no bearing on the conversation at all. Srila Prabhupada says that those who are initiated by the ritvik acaryas become the granddisciples of Srila Prabhupada. They become the disciples of the ritvik acaryas. The passage is clear, logical, easy to understand, and in line with our teachings. And Srila Prabhupada says that the new initiate is the disciple of the ritvik.

Again, let us substitute "proxy" for "ritvik":

*"Tamala Krsna: No, he's asking that these proxy-acaryas, they're officiating, giving diksa. Their... The people who they give diksa to, whose disciple are they?"*

*"Prabhupada: They're his disciple."*

*"Tamala Krsna: They're his disciple."*

*"Prabhupada: Who is initiating. He is granddisciple."*

Again, the passage would contradict itself. If the new initiate is the disciple of the proxy, then the proxy is not a proxy. And again, the proxy-initiation adherents try to resolve their contradiction by putting a twist on the passage. They read the passage differently, maybe because of a lack of clarity in the recording. They read it as:

*"Prabhupada: Who is initiating. His granddisciple." ("He is granddisciple" becomes "His granddisciple.")*

The Controversy Paper says:

*"In his question Tamal Krsna is asking about ritvik acaryas, not diksa gurus. Therefore we know, even before Prabhupada answers, that any disciples referred to can only belong to the initiator, Srila Prabhupada. As we have shown, this is the very definition of ritvik, he acts on someone else's behalf."*

The above paragraph has two faults. First, it assumes that Srila Prabhupada is the initiator without Srila Prabhupada's having said so. Nowhere in this conversation does Srila Prabhupada say that he will continue to be the initiator after his departure. Second, their "very definition of ritvik" is wrong again. "Ritvik" means "priest," and a priest is not obliged to act on someone else's behalf. The yajna brahmanas of Vrndavana were ritviks and were acting on their own behalf. One may argue that their yajna was not an initiation, but still they were acting on their own behalf, as opposed to the Controversy Paper's "very definition of ritvik."

The Controversy Paper continues:

*"Line 19-20. Tamal Krsna repeats the answer, and Srila Prabhupada continues: 'who is initiating. His grand disciple.' We have chosen the transcript version 'His grand disciple' over the version 'he is grand disciple' since it most closely resembles the tape, and seems to flow best with what is being said."*

But Srila Prabhupada may have said "He's grand disciple," in which case, "His grand disciple" would not resemble the tape more closely. The Controversy Paper continues:

*"We have established that in speaking in the third person Srila Prabhupada must be speaking of himself."*



They have established no such thing. They have proposed it, but the Folio proves the contrary. Again, Srila Prabhupada would speak of himself in the first person, like everyone else.

The Controversy Paper continues:

*"To help us understand more clearly what Srila Prabhupada is saying, let us replace third person with first person statements, shown in brackets, for lines 17-20."*

Two faults here: First, it is only an assumption, that Srila Prabhupada is speaking about himself in the third person. Second, by inserting words in brackets one could make Srila Prabhupada appear to speak any words one might want, even Mayavadi philosophy. The Controversy Paper continues:

*"TKG. .... Whose disciples are they?"*

*"S. Prabhupada. They are (my) disciples."*

*"TKG. They are (your) disciples."*

*"S. Prabhupada. (I am) initiating. (My) grand disciple."*

Why not "[He is] initiating. [My] grand disciple." Who can say which brackets are better?

Because the proxy-initiation adherents read "he is" as "his," they insist that "initiating" and "grand disciple" must both be preceded by pronouns in the same person ("I am initiating my granddisciple" or "He is initiating his granddisciple"). Thus they assume that the new initiate is the granddisciple of the initiator. And since the new initiate cannot be the granddisciple of the ritvik, he must be the granddisciple of Srila Prabhupada, and therefore Srila Prabhupada is the initiator.

But their logic goes in circles because they assume beforehand that their parenthetical insertions are correct: The insertions are correct because this is what Srila Prabhupada must have meant, and Srila Prabhupada must have meant this because of the inserted words. Here is the "classic circular argument" the proxy-initiation adherents mention in one of their papers: it is their own argument.

The proxy-initiation adherents would have Srila Prabhupada say, "I am initiating my granddisciple." Thus they admit that even according to their own view the new initiate is a granddisciple of Srila Prabhupada as opposed to the direct disciples initiated during Srila Prabhupada's physical presence. There is still be a one-generation difference between those initiated during Srila Prabhupada's physical presence and those initiated later. But how can some be direct disciples and others be granddisciples if the initiator is the same and pre-samadhi or post-samadhi makes no difference?

And why the obscure language? If Srila Prabhupada were speaking about himself as the initiator, why would he say "who" instead of "I"? "Who" (meaning "he who") refers to a general principle, not a particular person. Again, Srila Prabhupada's habit was to say "I" when speaking of himself. Why a sudden departure from his usual way of speaking and from clear language? The reading "He is granddisciple" requires no interpretation or stretching of the imagination. It is straightforward and logical, in line with Srila Prabhupada's usual way of speaking.

But whatever the reading, whatever the insertion, the fact remains that the new disciple is the granddisciple of Srila Prabhupada and cannot be the godbrother or godsister of the pre-samadhi disciples. No amount of word-twisting can change it:

*"Prabhupada: They're his disciple."*

*"Tamala Krsna: They're his disciple."*

*"Prabhupada: Who is initiating. He is granddisciple."*

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The May 28th conversation continues:

**Satsvarupa: Yes.**

**Tamala Krsna: That's clear.**

ANALYSIS:

This passage does not give any information. Public Domain. Digitized by Muthulakshmi Research Academy



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The May 28th conversation continues:

Satsvarupa: Then we have a question concer...

Prabhupada: When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it.

#### ANALYSIS:

Satsvarupa Maharaja is ready to move on to another question, but Srila Prabhupada continues the discussion. Although the proxy-initiation adherents say that Srila Prabhupada should have stopped speaking at the beginning of the discussion, Srila Prabhupada himself wants to continue.

Then Srila Prabhupada says:

*"When I order, 'You become guru,' he becomes regular guru."*

Taken out of context, the sentence could seemingly point to a future order, but in the context of the conversation it could only be a re-statement of the order given above by Srila Prabhupada. Otherwise, why would Srila Prabhupada say "That's all"?

The comment "That's all" implies that the instruction is complete, that there is no more to add. Srila Prabhupada is summing it up, not reversing it. One may say that the word "when" indicates a future order, but "when" does not necessarily indicate future any more than "but." ("When I see a sunrise, I think of Krsna.")

Then Srila Prabhupada says, "He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it," another simple restatement of what has already been said. This final statement is clear and needs no elaboration: "disciple of my disciple."

Again, let us test the proxy-initiation adherents' theory by substituting "I" for "he":

*"Prabhupada: When I order, 'You become guru,' I become regular guru. That's all."*

Thus, the proxy-initiation adherents' theory about "he" and "I" would ultimately reduce the conversation to nonsense.

In short, Srila Prabhupada has stated the principles of post-samadhi initiations, and he will confirm his order by naming some people to begin the process. This conversation is Srila Prabhupada's last official response to the question, How will initiations go on after your departure? Srila Prabhupada answers with terms such as *regular guru*, *disciple of my disciple*, and *granddisciple*.

There is nothing in this conversation to indicate that people initiated after the departure of Srila Prabhupada would be the disciples of anyone other than the person who gives the initiation, call him ritvik or not. The new initiates will be the granddisciples of Srila Prabhupada. Thus we find in this discussion an affirmation of Srila Prabhupada's teachings of the previous twelve years, in harmony with the Vedic tradition.

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### PART 3

#### An Analysis of the Word "Henceforward"

The proxy-initiation adherents base their theory of post-samadhi proxy initiation on the word "henceforward" in the following passage of the July 9th letter:

*"In the past Temple Presidents have written to Srila Prabhupada recommending a particular devotee's initiation. Now that Srila Prabhupada has named these representatives, Temple Presidents may henceforward send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple."*

The standard dictionaries define "henceforward" as "starting from now." The word "henceforward" signals that a process



must begin immediately, but it offers no precision as to when the process, once begun, must stop. In fact, no standard dictionary defines "henceforward" as "starting from now and continuing forever."

The following are some examples of Srila Prabhupada's using "henceforward" in a non-eternal aspect:

*"As I told you, that 2,500 years ago, or 5,000 years ago Vyasadeva wrote about Lord Buddha's appearance. Still, there is appearance of Kalki from this time, henceforward, after 400,000's of years Kalki will appear."* (From Prabhupada's Lectures Srimad-Bhagavatam 1971, 710816SB.LON)

*"Regarding printing 20,000 copies of Back To Godhead, I have appealed to 4 centers, namely New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and London to contribute \$750 monthly. I have got confirmation from Los Angeles, so I shall be glad to hear from New York also whether this center is going to hand over to me \$750 per month. I have no objection if this \$750 is collected in the way of advertisements from New York, but charges will be increased because we are going to print 20,000 copies henceforward."* (Letter to: Rayarama : 69-02-20 Los Angeles)

*"I have again begun speaking on the tapes and very soon you will get transcribed copies of my dictaphoning for being edited and laid out for printing, chapter-wise, the fourth canto. Let the second and third cantos be finished quickly so that the fourth canto can be started. Henceforward I shall be supplying material for all cantos and you must do the rest; editing, layout, printing, etc."* (Letter to: Candanacarya: 71-03-23 Bombay)

In each of these cases the period beginning with "henceforward" will have an end, whether or not specifically stated by Srila Prabhupada. Thus, "henceforward" does not necessarily mean "continuing forever," either in the dictionary or in Srila Prabhupada's usage.

One cannot say, then, that the "henceforward" in the July 9th letter necessarily means that the proxy initiations must continue after Srila Prabhupada's departure, especially in the light of the May 28th conversation.

It is unreasonable to impose one's own definition on a word and then use that imposed definition as proof of what Srila Prabhupada must have wanted. The July 9th letter in itself neither confirms nor denies the possibility of Srila Prabhupada's disciples becoming initiating gurus, but taken in the context of the May 28th conversation, the July 9th letter can only be the recommendation of proxies who would later start the process of post-samadhi initiation by Srila Prabhupada's disciples.

**Prabhupada:** "When I order, 'You become guru,' he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it."

end



## APPENDIX A

The Conversation of May 28, 1977

Satsvarupa: Then our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you're no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiation would be conducted.

Prabhupada: Yes. I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up, I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating acaryas.

Tamala Krsna: Is that called rtvik-acarya?

Prabhupada: Rtvik, yes.

Satsvarupa: Then what is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and the...

Prabhupada: He's guru. He's guru.

Satsvarupa: But he does it on your behalf.

Prabhupada: Yes. That is formality. Because in my presence one should not become guru, so on my behalf, on my order... Amara ajnaya guru hana. Be actually guru, but by my order.

Satsvarupa: So they may also be considered your disciples.

Prabhupada: Yes, they are disciples. Why consider? Who?

Tamala Krsna: No, he's asking that these rtvik-acaryas, they're officiating, giving diksa. Their... The people who they give diksa to, whose disciple are they?

Prabhupada: They're his disciple.

Tamala Krsna: They're his disciple.

Prabhupada: Who is initiating. He is granddisciple.

Satsvarupa: Yes.

Tamala Krsna: That's clear.

Satsvarupa: Then we have a question concer...

Prabhupada: When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it.



## APPENDIX B

## The Garden Conversation of July 7, 1977

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Srila Prabhupada? We're receiving a number of letters now, and these are people who want to get initiated. So up until now, since your becoming ill, we asked them to wait.

Prabhupada: The local, mean [men?], senior sannyasis can do that.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: That's what we were doing... I mean, formerly we were... The local GBC, sannyasis, were chanting on their beads, and they were writing to Your Divine Grace, and you were giving a spiritual name. So should that process be resumed, or should we...? I mean one thing is that it's said that the spiritual master takes on the... You know, he takes on the... He has to cleanse the disciple by... So we don't want that you should have to... Your health is not so good, so that should not be... That's why we've been asking everybody to wait. I just want to know if we should continue to wait some more time.

Prabhupada: No, the senior sannyasis...

Tamal Krishna Goswami: So they should continue to...

Prabhupada: You can give me a list of sannyasis. I will mark who will...

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Okay

Prabhupada: You can do. Kirtanananda can do. And our Satsvarupa can do. So these three, you can give, begin.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: So supposing someone is in America, should they simply write directly to Kirtanananda or Satsvarupa?

Prabhupada: Nearby. Jayatirtha can give.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Jayatirtha.

Prabhupada: Bhavanan..., er, Bhagavan. And he can do also. Harikesa.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Harikesa Maharaja.

Prabhupada: And... Five, six men, you divide who is nearest.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Who is nearest. So persons wouldn't have to write to Your Divine Grace. They could write directly to that person?

Prabhupada: Hm.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Actually they are initiating the person on Your Divine Grace's behalf. Those persons who are initiated are still your...

Prabhupada: Second initiation we shall think over, second initiation.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: This is for first initiation, okay. And for second initiation, for the time being they should...

Prabhupada: No, they have to wait. Second initiation, that should be given...

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Should... Some devotees are writing you now for second initiation, and I'm writing them to wait a while because you're not well. So can I continue to tell them that?

Prabhupada: They can do second initiation.



Tamal Krishna Goswami: By writing you.

Prabhupada: No. These men.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: These men, they can also do second initiation. So there's no need for devotees to write to you for first and second initiation. They can write to the man nearest them. But all these persons are still your disciples. Anybody who gives initiation is doing so on your behalf.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: You know that book I'm maintaining of all of your disciples' names? Should I continue that?

Prabhupada: Hm.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: So if someone gives initiation, like Harikesa Maharaja, he should send the person's name to us here and I'll enter it in the book. Okay. Is there someone else in India that you want to do this?

Prabhupada: India, I am here. We shall see. In India, Jayapataka.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Jayapataka Maharaja.

Prabhupada: You are also in India.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Yes.

Prabhupada: You can note down these names.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Yes, I have them.

Prabhupada: Who are they?

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Kirtanananda Maharaja, Satsvarupa Maharaja, Jayatirtha Prabhu, Bhagavan Prabhu, Harikesa Maharaja, Jayapataka Maharaja, and Tamal Krishna Maharaja.

Prabhupada: That's nice. Now you distribute.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Seven. There's seven names.

Prabhupada: For the time being, seven names, sufficient. You can make Ramesvara.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Ramesvara Maharaja.

Prabhupada: And Hridayananda.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: Oh, yeah. South America.

Prabhupada: So without waiting for me, wherever you consider it is right... That will depend on discretion.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: On discretion.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Tamal Krishna Goswami: That's for first and second initiations.

Prabhupada: Hm.

## APPENDIX C



The Letter of July 9, 1977

Vrindaban

9 July, 1977

77-07-09

To All G.B.C., and Temple Presidents

Dear Maharajas and Prabhus,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet. Recently when all of the GBC members were with His Divine Grace in Vrindavana, Srila Prabhupada indicated that soon He would appoint some of His senior disciples to act as "ritvik" - representative of the acarya, for the purpose of performing initiations, both first initiation and second initiation. His Divine Grace has so far given a list of eleven disciples who will act in that capacity:

- His Holiness Kirtanananda Swami
- His Holiness Satsvarupa dasa Gosvami
- His Holiness Jayapataka Swami
- His Holiness Tamala Krsna Gosvami
- His Holiness Hrdayananda Gosvami
- His Holiness Bhavananda Gosvami
- His Holiness Hamsaduta Swami
- His Holiness Ramesvara Swami
- His Holiness Harikesa Swami
- His Grace Bhagavan dasa Adhikari
- His Grace Jayatirtha dasa Adhikari

In the past Temple Presidents have written to Srila Prabhupada recommending a particular devotee's initiation. Now that Srila Prabhupada has named these representatives, Temple Presidents may henceforward send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee as an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupada by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gayatri thread, just as Srila Prabhupada has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the above eleven senior devotees acting as His representative. After the Temple President receives a letter from these representatives giving the spiritual name or the thread, he can perform the fire yajna in the temple as was being done before. The name of a newly initiated disciple should be sent by the representative who has accepted him or her to Srila Prabhupada, to be included in His Divine Grace's "Initiated Disciples" book. Hoping this finds you all well.

Your servant,

Tamala Krsna Gosvami Secretary to Srila Prabhupada

Approved: A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami



## APPENDIX D

## Definition of "Ritvik"

The following is contributed by Hridayananda dasa Goswami:

In my explanation, I will use a dot before the r to indicate a vowel r, and a capital vowel means that vowel is long.

The word .rtvik is a combination of two elements:

1. .rtu means, in Monier-Williams (MW), "any settled point of time, fixed time, time appointed for any action, especially for sacrifices and other regular worship, thus the right time etc." In the Bhagavatam Mahabharata, the word usually means "season." For example, a woman's fertile "season" is called .rtu-kAla. Similarly, when we hear of seasons being disturbed or inverted in Kali-yuga, the word is usually .rtu.

2. ij comes from the root yaj, "to sacrifice." In the word .rtvik, the 'v' comes from the 'u' of .rtu, and the 'k' comes from 'j'. I will spare you more technical explanations of the phonetic rules that cause this.

Thus .rtvik means, in MW, "sacrificing at the proper time, sacrificing regularly; a priest (usually four are enumerated, viz. Hot.r, Adhvaryu, Brahman, and UdgAt.r etc." These are the well known priests that officiate at Vedic ritualistic sacrifices.

The significant point here is that terms such as ".rtvig-guru, .rtvig-acarya, simply do not exist. There is no such term in any Sanskrit dictionary, nor in any recognized Vedic literature, to my knowledge. There is no such term because there is no such concept. In other words, our friends are proposing something that does not exist in Vedic culture. This is the main problem with it.

\* \* \*

The following is contributed by Suhotra Swami:

Re rtvik, I have this definition from *The Puranic Encyclopedia* by Vettam Mani, published by Motilal Banarsidass (Delhi-Patna-Varnasi, 1979 reprint), p. 654:

RTVIK: A Priest who officiates at a yaaga. Those who perform yaagas like Agnisadhaana, Agnishtoma, Paakavana etc. are called Rtviks. Manusmrti, Chapter 2, Verse 143.

The Manu-samhita reference is at least one sastric source for the word that could be referred to; though an argument has to be provided to bridge that sense to the sense under discussion in our paper. But that's not difficult. The connection is rather obvious: an official priest at a sacrificial ceremony--in our sense, the ceremony of Vaisnava initiation.



## APPENDIX E

## A Reply to the Comments of Krsna Kant Prabhu

by Badrinarayan Dasa

Dear Krsna Kant prabhu:

Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupad.

I have read your critique of our paper, "Disciple of my Disciple" (the correct name, for future reference), and I appreciate your getting back with us so quickly. As you have spoken bluntly, I hope you will not mind if I reply in kind. Frankly, to my reading of your letter, it seems that it attempts to dismiss our paper out of hand, without seriously addressing the points raised in it.

You note that on this topic, there have been differing comments and differing interpretations by various GBCs and senior ISKCON members over the years.

It strikes me as no wonder that there appear to be contradictory statements. Rather, this should come as no surprise to anyone: the issue has been under discussion for close to twenty years now. The general understanding has evolved from the days of automatic uttama adhikaris and "zonal acharyas" to madhyama adhikaris (for those who deem themselves able to measure these things) who are humbly and sincerely serving Srila Prabhupada by carrying out his order. Thus our title, "Disciple of My Disciple."

You may argue that we now need to complete that "evolution" to accepting the concept of permanent proxies, or the proposed rtvik system. I would counter that while how to properly carry out the order from Srila Prabhupad has been under discussion for over twenty years, the basic principle of "regular gurus" ... "grand-disciple" ... "disciples of my disciples" has never once been in doubt from any of the sources you point to as giving "contradictory statements."

Srila Prabhupad's instructions on the matter are a continuum from the May conversation to the July garden discussion to the July letter. It unfolds in a series of instructions and acts by His Divine Grace (as we state in our paper: in the same fashion that the full understanding of the Bhagavad Gita unfolds over eighteen chapters).

The same is true for Srila Prabhupad's use of the word "rtvik." It must be understood according to the whole context.

You do not see it this way, choosing instead to focus solely on the July letter and your interpretation of the word "henceforward." Therefore, it is predictable that you will draw a conclusion different from our paper's. On these points, it appears that we can only agree to disagree.

As for your request that we carefully study, research, and respond to all the points in your paper, "Final Instruction," we are trying to balance these concerns with your simultaneous request of quick responses. Our conclusion on how to best proceed was to release our work in steps, as it is completed. The subject is deep and has many important aspects. To do it justice, will require a number of papers.

Here is the history of how "Disciple of My Disciple" came into being and an outline of the GBC's plan to address the rest of these issues. As you know, we had our meeting with several advocates of the permanent proxy system in New Dvaraka. After that meeting, we concluded that it might be a more fruitful dialogue if done in writing. There was some discussion amongst those of us interested in the topic, and as a result of those talks, Umapati Maharaj, Giridhari Maharaj, and I approached the GBC with our plan to research the issue and write a paper based on that work.

We presented that paper to the GBC philosophical committee in Mayapur this year and it was agreed by them that it should be distributed as an approved ISKCON position paper.

"Disciple of My Disciple" is only the first step in the process. As mentioned to you previously, there will also be a serious consideration of the other points made in your paper "The Final Order" to come out as another paper within the next month or two. There is also a research committee to study the authenticity of the May conversation tape, the claims of missing tapes, to interview those present in Vrindaban at the time, etc. The committee is just beginning work, and has Kalakantha



prabhu and Dr. Burke Rochford as members, to insure an unbiased, neutral study. Finally, the GBC has commissioned a number of authors to study and submit papers on the vast range of the underlying issues (The topics include studying the mistakes of the zonal acharya system days, developing a better understanding and appreciation of siksa disciple relationships, madhyama adhikari gurus or uttama adhikari only, standards for becoming a guru, and a number of other items.) These papers will come out in a book, scheduled for conclusion by Gaura Purnima 1998.

But as we have said repeatedly, we have to start at the beginning, that being, What were Srila Prabhupad's instructions when clearly and specifically asked, "How will initiations go on in the future, particularly at that time that you are no longer with us?"

Our paper "Disciple of My Disciple" focuses on this bedrock issue. I would ask you to please read it again, with this in mind and in light of the above comments, and let me know what you think.

Thank you for your correspondence,

Your servant,

Badrinarayan dasa







# Where the Rttvik People are Wrong

by Jayadvaita Swami

(January 1996)

*If Srila Prabhupada didn't clearly and definitely say it, and if it first came up after 1977, whatever it is, don't trust it.*

----Rule of Thumb

The purpose of this paper is to deal with a particular theory of how Srila Prabhupada intended devotees in ISKCON to receive initiation after his physical departure.

We'll come to the controversies shortly, but first let's look at what we all agree on.

## What all of us agree on

Forget for a moment that Srila Prabhupada has physically disappeared. Put aside questions of what should happen in modern-day ISKCON. For the moment, let's just look at the standard teaching Srila Prabhupada gave us about the disciplic succession.

I apologize for presenting a piece of my own writing from BACK TO GODHEAD, but I think it gives a reasonably concise summary that any ISKCON devotee would agree with. Here it is.



## From Master to Disciple

The parampara is the chain of spiritual masters and disciples through which Kṛṣṇa consciousness is taught and received. In Bhagavad-gītā Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "I taught this ancient science of yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvan. Vivasvan taught it to his son Manu. And Manu taught it to his son Ikṣvaku. In this way, through the system of parampara, disciplic succession, the science was understood by the saintly kings." In the parampara system, then, the original teacher, the original spiritual master, is Lord Kṛṣṇa, God Himself. The Lord gives perfect knowledge, and that knowledge is handed down from master to disciple. It's like a ripe fruit handed down from person to person, from the top of the tree to the ground. In the chain of parampara, each spiritual master has the duty to transmit the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness *as it is*. He is not to add anything, subtract anything, or change anything. He simply has to deliver the message, just as a postman delivers a letter, contents fully intact. According to the Vedic scriptures, one who is serious about attaining self-realization or God realization or the ultimate goal in life must approach such a bona fide spiritual master. It is not optional; accepting a bona fide spiritual master is essential. The method of accepting the spiritual master is explained in Bhagavad-gītā: one must surrender to him, inquire from him, and serve him. Inquiry alone is not enough. One must humbly submit oneself before the spiritual master, accepting him as a representative of God. The spiritual master is not God, and any so-called master who claims to be God should at once be rejected as bogus. But the spiritual master is honored as much as God because he intimately serves God through the disciplic chain. Because each spiritual master serves his own spiritual master, all the members of the chain are ultimately servants of God and therefore very dear to God. More precisely, the bona fide spiritual master is the servant of the servant of the servant of God, or Kṛṣṇa. This is one of the secrets of the parampara system: to be a genuine master, one must be a genuine servant. The student, therefore, surrenders to the spiritual master as a disciple and serves him, and the master responds by answering the disciple's questions, enlightening him with transcendental knowledge. For the sincere disciple who has full faith in Kṛṣṇa and equal faith in the bona fide spiritual master, all the truths of spiritual realization are factually revealed. The genuine disciple feels everlastingly indebted to the spiritual master and continues to serve him forever. In this way, even when the spiritual master leaves this world, the master and disciple are connected. The disciple continues to serve the spiritual master by following what the master has taught him, and by teaching it to others. Thus the bona fide disciple becomes a bona fide spiritual master, and the chain of succession continues.

Leave aside, for the moment, further questions about the credentials of the bona fide spiritual master. Leave aside whether he must be an *uttama adhikari* or whether a *madhayama adhikari* is good enough, whether to serve as guru one must receive an explicit personal order from the spiritual master or whether a standing general order is in effect. We can talk about these matters later. For now, we are looking only at the fundamentals, at the broad principles everyone agrees on.



I feel confident that every reasonable disciple of Srila Prabhupada would be with me on these principles so far. This is what Srila Prabhupada taught to all of us, from 1966 through 1977. It's what all of us learned and accepted and repeated to others. It's "plain vanilla."<sup>1</sup>

On this much, then, we should all be in agreement.

Now, let's move on to something else that everyone agrees on.

Srila Prabhupada himself, in 1977, appointed eleven disciples to serve as rttvik gurus, or "officiating spiritual masters." He authorized these rttviks to decide which candidates to accept, and to chant on the candidates' beads and give the new disciples spiritual names. The rttviks were to do this on Srila Prabhupada's behalf, and the new disciples were to be not those of the rttviks but of Srila Prabhupada himself.

On July 9, 1977, Srila Prabhupada signed a document that makes these facts unmistakably clear.

I hope we all agree so far. If not, we're in deeper trouble than I thought. But if so--if we all do agree--we can now put these issues aside and move on.

### **What is the post-samadhi rttvik-guru doctrine?**

We now come to the question to be decided:

**Did Srila Prabhupada intend that, *even after his physical departure*, his disciples would continue to serve as rttvik gurus by initiating devotees who would be not their disciples but his?**

On November 14, 1977, Srila Prabhupada ended his manifest physical pastimes and, as the traditional language puts it, "entered samadhi." The assertion that his disciples should continue to serve as rttviks, then, is what we may call the "post-samadhi rttvik-guru doctrine."

I trust you will accept that my statement of the question has been accurate and fair and my language neutral.

Now, moving on, I should next make clear that the post-samadhi rttvik-guru doctrine comes in two forms, which we may call "hard" and "soft."

The "hard" doctrine says this:

Srila Prabhupada is the only initiating spiritual master for all ISKCON devotees, and he shall continue to be so forever. Acting as rttviks on his behalf, certain disciples may initiate new devotees, who then become not their disciples but his. ISKCON shall follow this system, and only this system, forever.



Differing on certain points is the "soft" doctrine:

Srila Prabhupada is the only initiating spiritual master for all ISKCON devotees. Acting as rttviks on his behalf, certain disciples may initiate new devotees, who then become not their disciples but his. This system shall continue until the appearance within ISKCON of pure devotees fit to initiate disciples of their own. The rttvik system will then come to an end.

It should be instantly clear that these two doctrines are incompatible and mutually exclusive. If the hard doctrine is right, the soft doctrine is wrong, and vice versa. Just as a man cannot be both living and dead, or a woman both pregnant and sterile, we cannot have a rttvik system that is both permanent and temporary. It's either one or the other--not both.

(I am leaving aside here appeals to "inconceivability." By arguing that something is "inconceivably true," one can make a case for literally anything. We accept, of course, that certain scripturally endorsed contradictions are "inconceivably true." But if we were therefore willing to accept "It's inconceivable" as a valid argument for everything, nothing could ever be shown false. We would then be obliged to accept the truth of even the most ridiculous nonsense.)

For the sake of thoroughness, we may also note that some people have put forward a hybrid "soft/hard" doctrine, in which pure devotees initiate their own disciples and yet the rttvik system continues side by side. This doctrine, of course, is incompatible with the other two. If it is right, both of the others must be wrong, and if either of the others is right, this one must be wrong.

Now, therefore, we have what I think is a fair and accurate statement of what for the sake of brevity we may call the "p.s. rttvik-guru doctrines." (We've seen that there are more than one of them.) I've considered dropping the "p.s." ("post-samadhi"), but I've retained it to avoid later confusion. To keep our thinking clear, we will need to remember that what's at issue is only what system Srila Prabhupada intended for *after* his physical departure.

So the doctrines are now before us, and we've seen that only one of them, at the most, could be true. The question now, therefore, is whether any of these doctrines truly represents what Srila Prabhupada intended, and if so which one.

### **What are the arguments in favor of the doctrines?**

So now let us look at the arguments and evidence put forward in favor of the post-samadhi rttvik doctrines.

From devotees I've spoken with and papers I've read, the arguments seem to take the following forms:

1. Argument from restatement of what's accepted.
2. Argument from personal testimony.
3. Argument from logical necessity.
4. Argument from the virtues of the doctrines.
5. Argument from a lack of counter-evidence.
6. Linguistic arguments.



Let's examine these arguments one by one.

# 1. Argument from restatement of what's accepted.

Devotees have sometimes announced that they have "irrefutable proof" of the rttvik-guru system. They then offer into evidence various quotes in which Srila Prabhupada speaks of appointing rttviks. Next comes the document in which Srila Prabhupada actually appoints them, and then letters in which Srila Prabhupada makes clear to the rttviks their duties. Then further evidence: testimony from senior devotees that Srila Prabhupada did indeed appoint rttvik gurus.

On top of this we are offered a careful tracing of history: Srila Prabhupada gradually handed things over--first the performance of fire yajnas, then the chanting on beads, and finally the actual acceptance of candidates and giving of spiritual names. Yet through all of this, we are reminded, the new initiates were always disciples of Srila Prabhupada, and no one else.

And then comes the conclusion: In the face of such an overwhelming body of evidence, how can one deny that Srila Prabhupada did indeed establish the rttvik-guru system?

The answer, of course, is simple: What the argument succeeds in proving is what everyone already accepts. That Srila Prabhupada appointed rttvik gurus and established a "rttvik- guru system" is not in dispute. Everyone agrees about it.

The argument, therefore, entirely misses the issue.

What's at issue is whether Srila Prabhupada intended some form of rttvik-guru system to continue *after his physical departure*.

Some people seem to think that merely offering more and more evidence that Srila Prabhupada set up a rttvik-guru system somehow makes the case for a *post-samadhi* rttvik-guru system stronger and stronger. It doesn't. If one wanted to prove the existence of two-headed pigeons, no amount of evidence that there are pigeons would be enough. That pigeons exist is something we already know. What would need to be shown is that some of them have two heads.

Arguments proving again and again what's already accepted do nothing to settle the issue at hand. When used knowingly and deliberately, such arguments are a form of cheating. When used innocently, they are merely irrelevant.

So let's leave this behind and go on.

# 2. Argument from personal testimony.

We now come to an argument that *is* relevant: the personal testimony of devotees who say they heard before Srila Prabhupada's departure that Srila Prabhupada had set up a post-samadhi rttvik-guru system.

Gauri Dasa Pandit, one of Srila Prabhupada's disciples, tells us that while serving as an assistant to His Holiness Tamal Krsna Goswami



in Vrindaban, on or about May 23, 1977, he directly heard Srila Prabhupada tell Tamal Krishna Goswami that the appointed rttviks should continue to serve as rttviks even after Srila Prabhupada's departure. This conversation, he tells us, was even recorded on tape.

In addition, Yasodanandana Dasa tells us that in May 1977 Tamal Krishna Goswami and Bhavananda Goswami indicated to him that Srila Prabhupada had endorsed a post-samadhi rttvik-guru system. Yasodananda Prabhu offers a diary in which he noted this at the time.

When we come to this sort of testimony, several questions are naturally relevant: How many witnesses are testifying? How reliable are their accounts? How well do they agree with one another?

From the beginning, then, this argument is in trouble. How many people claim to have heard directly from Srila Prabhupada that Srila Prabhupada wanted this system? Only one. He was a junior man, not a leading devotee, Srila Prabhupada was not confiding in him directly, and though we have nothing bad we wish to say of him he has not especially distinguished himself by his record of devotional service. Moreover, for some reason he held back his testimony until many years after Srila Prabhupada left.

Most important, Gauri Dasa Pandit, for all his good qualities, may still be subject to the four frailties common to all conditioned souls: imperfect senses, a tendency to make mistakes, a tendency to fall into illusion, and a propensity to cheat.

Yasodanandana Dasa, of course, is presumably subject to the same four shortcomings. And apart from this, a serious concern is that his testimony is second hand.

If the tape recording Gauri Dasa speaks of has ever existed, it has never been found. One may obliquely suggest that someone must have deliberately erased it. But in any case, evidence that doesn't exist is no evidence at all.

What we are left with, then, is mainly Gauri Dasa's lone report. And according to Tamal Krsna Goswami, the other person allegedly present, what Gauri Dasa tells us is wrong.

At best, then, the evidence from personal testimony is equivocal and weak.

Here, perhaps is the place to bring forward a point made by Tamal Krishna Maharaja and approvingly quoted in several papers by proponents of post-samadhi rttvik-guru doctrines.

At a meeting in Topanga Canyon in 1980, Tamal Krishna Maharaja stated that Srila Prabhupada had never appointed the eleven rttviks to be anything more than rttviks. "If it had been more than that," he said, "you can bet your bottom dollar that Prabhupada would have spoken for days and hours and weeks on end about about how to set up this thing with the gurus, but he didn't. . ."

The same point about how Srila Prabhupada let us know what he wanted is relevant here. If he had wanted a rttvik-guru system to continue after his departure, would we have expected him to have



said so merely once in private to his secretary, or would he have spoken about it with his leading devotees "for days and hours and weeks on end"?

For those familiar with how Srila Prabhupada did things, the answer should be easy.

This is a point we shall return to later. But for now let us move on.

### 3. Argument from logical necessity.

Another line of reasoning begins with a critique--much of it valid--of Srila Prabhupada's leading disciples and their failings after his departure. None of Srila Prabhupada's disciples, it is argued, is now fit to serve as a bona fide spiritual master. And scriptural arguments are offered to support this point of view.

Therefore, the argument continues, since no one else is fit, the only person of whom we can safely take shelter is Srila Prabhupada himself.

Srila Prabhupada knew the limitations of his disciples, and he must have known what would happen. Therefore, the argument concludes, he *must have* set up the rttvik-guru system.

The response to this argument is simple: It is speculative and should therefore be rejected. A speculation may be reasonable or unreasonable, but Srila Prabhupada taught us to rely on authority, not on speculation.

Moreover, *this* speculation is logically defective. To dispose of it, we need not decide whether Srila Prabhupada's disciples are fit or unfit, or whether they "received the order" to become guru or not. Nor do we need to discuss what the credentials of a bona fide spiritual master should be. (These are important topics, but they are not the topic at hand.)

Suppose for the moment that Srila Prabhupada's disciples are all indeed unfit. It does not therefore logically follow that Srila Prabhupada *must have* (note the speculative language) set up a post-samadhi rttvik-guru system.

Instead, if he found his disciples all unfit he could have blessed one or more to quickly attain spiritual perfection. Or he could have declared that henceforward Krsna Himself, or the Bhagavatam itself, or the holy name itself would be the spiritual master. Or he could have simply left everything up to Krsna.

The point is that it's not enough to talk about what Srila Prabhupada could have done or must have done. We have to see what Srila Prabhupada actually did.

To argue that Srila Prabhupada *must have* set up a rttvik-guru system and that the evidence for this is so scanty only because it *must have* been suppressed and covered up is merely to take the speculation one step further.

And speculating is not the way Srila Prabhupada told us to do things. One who wants to take shelter of Srila Prabhupada, therefore, should



avoid taking shelter of speculations.

Coming back to a point on which all agree, we should all take shelter of Srila Prabhupada and his instructions. Srila Prabhupada is the exalted pure devotee who gave us the Krsna consciousness movement. We can all be completely confident of his instructions and his example. And we can be sure that by strictly and sincerely following Srila Prabhupada we will always be safe and secure.

But we must follow Srila Prabhupada as he himself instructed us to follow. We must follow Srila Prabhupada and those who follow Srila Prabhupada, not the speculations of others.

This brings us to the next argument.

#### 4. Argument from the virtues of the doctrines.

The next argument is really just an extension of the previous one: Srila Prabhupada *must have* set up a rttvik-guru system, because the system has so many advantages.

"Just see all the benefits of this system," declare the advocates of this point of view. "How much better it would be than the alternatives."

Or the same argument is put in negative form: We are in trouble and perplexity only because we have failed to take up this wonderful system.

To make it all clear to us, the advocates sometimes offer charts showing us the benefits their system would bring, compared to the bad points of what's going on now.

But those who have learned from history will refuse to be lured. The one-appointed-acarya system of the Gaudiya Math, the zonal-acarya system of ISKCON--both looked so good. They seemed to offer so many advantages. Or the alternatives seemed so bleak.

For many, only in retrospect could those fine-looking systems be recognized as deviations and therefore causes of disaster.

But, again, what Srila Prabhupada trained us to do was not to evaluate all the possibilities, choose what seems to us to have the most points going for it, and then conclude that this *must have* been what he wanted. What he trained us to do was to strictly follow what he taught us.

If there's one lesson we should have learned from history it should be this: However good a path of action may seem, if it's against what Srila Prabhupada taught us, forget it.

#### 5. Argument from a lack of counter-evidence.

We now come to another argument we can deal with quickly.

Where, it is demanded, has the sastra or Srila Prabhupada said that one can't approach an acarya for initiation merely because he has physically departed? Where do the authorities tell us that a post-



samadhi rttvik system is no good? Can you show me a verse? Can you point to a purport? How then can you say it's not valid?

This is simply a classic argumentative blunder, a textbook fallacy.

"How do we know that you don't beat your wife?" demands the rumor-monger. And then you're stuck there, trying to come up with evidence to counter a groundless accusation.

How do you know there's not a celestial planet controlled by a three-legged grasshopper with seven heads and superhuman intelligence? Can you show me a verse that refutes it? Can you point to a purport?

How can you prove it's not bona fide to take initiation from the ghost of Aristotle's mother or a picture of a self-realized boa constrictor?

One must support one's views by evidence, not by assertions that a lack of counter-evidence makes them true. Enough said.

## 6. Linguistic arguments.

Last, we come to arguments based on linguistics.

One may ask, "If Srila Prabhupada wanted a post-samadhi rttvik system, where does so he say so in black and white?" The proponents of the p.s. rttvik doctrines have an answer: The black-and-white evidence is to be found in two places--in the letter in which Srila Prabhupada appoints the eleven rttviks and in Srila Prabhupada's last will.

The appointment letter is dated July 9th, 1977. It is signed by Tamal Krishna Goswami and countersigned "Approved A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami." Its authority is beyond question.

The letter explains that Srila Prabhupada has appointed some senior disciples to act as rttviks, and it lists eleven disciples Srila Prabhupada has so far named to act in that capacity. The letter then says:

*"Now that Srila Prabhupada has named these representatives, Temple Presidents may henceforward send recommendations for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee as an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupad by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gayatri thread, just as Srila Prabhupad has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the above eleven senior devotees acting as His representative. After the Temple President receives a letter from these representatives giving the spiritual name or the thread, he can perform the fire yajna in the temple as was being done before. The name of a newly initiated disciple should be sent by the representative who has accepted him or her to Srila Prabhupad, to be included in His Divine Grace's 'Initiated Disciples' book."*

Clearly, this letter establishes a rttvik-guru system. But one may ask where it says that such a system should continue even after Srila Prabhupada's departure. The answer given is that this is clear from



the word "henceforward."

The next source of evidence, Srila Prabhupada's last will, is dated June 4, 1977. In the will, Srila Prabhupada declares that the Governing Body Commission "will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness." He says, "Each temple will be an ISKCON property and will be managed by three executive directors. The system of management will continue as it is now and there is no need of any change."

The rest of the will deals almost entirely with provisions for safeguarding ISKCON's properties. Srila Prabhupada names the executive directors for them. Then he provides that in the event that a director dies or fails to act, the remaining directors may appoint a new one, "provided the new director is my initiated disciple following strictly all the rules and regulations of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness as detailed in my books, and provided that there are never less than three (3) or more than five (5) executive directors acting at one time."

How is this black-and-white evidence of a post-samadhi rttvik-guru system? Proponents explain that since Srila Prabhupada certainly intended his will to be in force for generations after his departure, and since he stipulated that each successor director would have to be "my initiated disciple," it follows that Srila Prabhupada would continue to initiate, long after his physical departure, through a rttvik-guru system.

Now, what are we to make of these two points of evidence?

The first thing we note is that they're weak. What would strong evidence look like? Something like this:

"Acting on my behalf, my disciples serving as rttvik gurus shall continue to initiate even after my physical departure. The new disciples initiated shall not be disciples of the rttviks. They shall be my own."

A statement like that, either in the appointment letter or in Srila Prabhupada's will, or anywhere else, would have settled the matter once and for all. Of course, no such statement exists.

In the absence of such a clear, unequivocal statement, proponents of rttvik-guru doctrines have to rely on inference and build their case on more slippery ground. Let's look more closely.

Let us start with the word "henceforward." In the appointment letter, Srila Prabhupada's desire that the rttvik-guru system last forever is supposedly set forth to the world in this one highly significant word. The meaning, we are reminded, is clear: "from now on." And so Srila Prabhupada desired that the rttvik-guru system continue even after his physical departure.

Now, the first thing to note about this argument is that it works only for the "hard" version of the post-samadhi rttvik doctrine, in which only rttviks initiate forever--or perhaps for the hybrid "hard/soft" version. The "soft" version, in which the rttvik system runs till some qualified gurus come along, is ruled out.



Taking "henceforward" to mean literally forever, never will the rttvik-guru system come to an end. By this "hard" version of the doctrine, even should an uttama-adhikari someday appear, he will never initiate disciples of his own. At most, he will serve merely as a rttvik. For according to this hard version of the doctrine, Srila Prabhupada is the final member of the disciplic succession. The succession has come to an end. Srila Prabhupada is the only guru forever after. *Henceforward*, all new devotees will be his disciples, through his appointed rttviks.

And since we're insisting that "henceforward" must mean literally forever, we must apply it not merely to a selected portion of what Srila Prabhupada's appointment letter says but to the letter in its entirety.

"Temple presidents may *henceforward* send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of *these eleven representatives* are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, *these* representatives may accept the devotee... The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *the above eleven* senior devotees acting as his representative."

If we're being literal, as the argument says we must, then let's be literal. Though the letter says that Srila Prabhupada has "so far" given a list of eleven rttviks, he never added to the list. So this is it. The *only* authorized rttviks are *these eleven*. There is no mention that any of them may ever be removed or replaced, nor is there any mention of any successor. Nor does Srila Prabhupada provide that the list may be altered by the GBC. Henceforward, *these eleven*.

Of these, one--Jayatirtha Dasa--fell into intoxication and illicit sex and is now dead. How he will continue to serve as rttvik henceforward is unclear. But presumably he must, provided we can find out where he is so we can send him requests for initiation from the temples nearest.

And then we have Kirtanananda Swami, Bhavananda Goswami, Ramesvara Swami, and Bhagavan Dasa Adhikari, all fallen from their spiritual vows but serving eternally as rttviks nonetheless.

Or Hamsadutta Swami. His falldowns have become the stuff of literature, yet now that he has become humble, perhaps he is available to serve as a rttvik guru from now till the end of time. For some, perhaps, once again, Hamsadutta is the only way.

If these choices somehow don't suit you, you're left with Harikesa Swami, Jayapataka Swami, Hridayananda Goswami, Tamal Krishna Goswami, or Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami. The problem here, of course (aside from the possibility that you may not like them), is that all of them are sure they were supposed to serve as rttviks only until Srila Prabhupada's departure. As far as they're concerned, the post-samadhi rttvik doctrines are bunk. Now these devotees wouldn't serve as rttviks for love or money. So if you're looking for an authorized rttvik, go back to the other names on the list.

And remember, *henceforward*--from now till the end of time-- these are the only authorized rttviks.



My apologies for the sarcasm, but a person who puts forward an argument is obliged to live with its consequences. And if the consequences are absurd, so is the argument.

So let's suppose you go for the "hard/soft" version of the doctrine, in which self-effulgent acaryas come along to initiate yet still the rttviks continue side by side. When those self-effulgent acaryas show up, what's the need of them? You can still become Srila Prabhupada's disciple through the rttviks, and that's a safer bet, just in case the effulgence might wear off. And when it comes to rttviks, you're still stuck with these eleven--and only these eleven. Good luck.

Of course, one could take "henceforward" in a more elastic and informal sense. For example, I might say, "Henceforward I shall take my walk on Juhu Beach every day." Must that mean literally from now till the end of my life? Or, still more literally, from now through eternity, even after I'm physically gone? Or could it simply mean from now till I leave Bombay?

Take the word super-literally if you like--but then be prepared to embrace all the consequences.

Unfortunately, proponents of rttvik doctrines rarely do this. Instead, most often they'll start out with insisting on a literal meaning of "henceforward"--an insistence that fits only with "hard" or "hard/soft" versions of the doctrine. Then, having put forward their proof, they switch over to embracing the "soft" version, with which the literal meaning entirely clashes. This, in a word, is cheating. Not a good sign.

So now we come to the second piece of evidence, that phrase from Srila Prabhupada's will in which he stipulates that each new executive director for the ISKCON properties must be "my initiated disciple."

The logic, again, is that since Srila Prabhupada must have wanted to protect these properties forever, he must forever have direct disciples, initiated through a rttvik system.

Again, please note that this logic works only for the "hard" form of rttvik doctrine (or for the "hard/soft" version), in which the rttvik system lasts forever. The "soft" version, in which the rttvik system lasts only until the appearance of qualified gurus, is ruled out: for the will to be followed, Srila Prabhupada must have direct disciples forever, through the agency of his rttviks (again, "these eleven").

Even if one wants to go with a "hard/soft" rttvik doctrine, in which rttviks and pure devotees in Srila Prabhupada's line initiate side by side, one might wonder why the disciples of those pure devotees are to be excluded from serving as executive directors. Is their initiation somehow less effective? Are they not equally connected with Srila Prabhupada? But this is a small point. Let us go on.

Before we accept this phrase from Srila Prabhupada's will as a clear sign of Srila Prabhupada's intention for an eternally existing system of rttvik gurus, let us pause for a moment to see how that phrase got in there. Doing so won't tip the scales one way or the other, but the history is interesting.



It appears that the theme for the will arises in Vrindaban on May 27, 1977. That day, Giriraja Swami says to Srila Prabhupada: "This morning you gave the hint that there might be envious persons coming to take away our properties, so in the GBC meeting we discussed this point." He then relates how a committee of devotees has come up with a "model trust deed" to protect the properties.

Introducing the text, Ramesvara Swami says, "This is based on the BBT Trust document that you wrote many years ago." He then begins reading the new document.

In the course of reading, he comes to the list of trustees for various temples, and gradually to those for Vrindavana. "The proposed trustees are Aksayananda Swami, Gopala Krsna and Visvambhara." Visvambhara Dayal (known as "Bhagatji") was a devoted friend of ISKCON who rendered much service to Srila Prabhupada in Vrindaban.

The following conversation ensues:

**Prabhupada:** Visvambhara is not our regular disciple.

**Jayapataka:** Shouldn't be included.

**Prabhupada:** Then he has to accept sannyasa from me.

**Jayatirtha:** Jaya.

**Prabhupada:** He should know...

**Tamal Krsna:** Become initiated.

**Jayapataka:** Trustee must be initiated disciple.

**Prabhupada:** Oh, yes.

**Ramesvara:** If he is seen... He could be on the advisory board.

**Prabhupada:** No, you can say that "If you take sannyasa, you become on this."

**Tamal Krsna:** So we'll talk to him, and if he says no, then we'll select another person and come back and tell you who our choice is.

A few days later, on June 2, devotees present Srila Prabhupada a revised draft.

**Giriraja:** So we drafted a will, including the trust for the properties of India and some of the other. . .

**Prabhupada:** Will? Will, there will be direction that "Management should be done like this." That's all.

**Giriraja:** Yes.

**Prabhupada:** Nobody can say in court case that "This temple will be in charge of this person, this temple. . ."

**Ramesvara:** Yes, just like you said.

**Giriraja:** So we've included those points. . .

In the original draft, the successor trustees are simply "never less than three or more than five." But in the second draft the devotees working on the document have added that the trustees, in this draft called "executive directors," are to be "initiated disciples" following the regulative principles.

Srila Prabhupada signs the will two days later.

If after Srila Prabhupada disappeared he would cease to initiate, why did the devotees working on the document use the phrase "my initiated disciple"? Why not language that took into account that



both Srila Prabhupada and his disciples would soon disappear?

"We weren't used to thinking like that," says Giriraja Swami. "In retrospect it's very naive."<sup>2</sup>

But however the language came to be there, the will is signed by Srila Prabhupada, and it clearly says that each successor director should be Srila Prabhupada's initiated disciple.

So the argument still stands: How could a director generations from now be Srila Prabhupada's disciple unless initiated by Srila Prabhupada's rttvik?

Here opponents of p.s. rttvik doctrines might argue that we cannot accept the dictionary meaning of "disciple" but instead must offer an interpretation. When the dictionary meaning is clear, no interpretation is needed. But when the meaning is equivocal, an interpretation may be warranted.

Srila Prabhupada gives this example: One may say, "There is a residential quarter on the Ganges." But then a question arises: "The Ganges is water, so how could there be houses on the water?" The answer offered is that "on the Ganges" doesn't mean literally on the water of the Ganges but rather "on the bank of the Ganges."

Srila Prabhupada gives this as an example of a legitimate interpretation, offered when there is a legitimate need.

One might argue, then, that since accepting the dictionary meaning of "disciple" would have the unexpected result of requiring the entire system of guru-parampara to be put aside, here an interpretation is legitimately called for.

In fact, however, no such interpretation is required. The dictionary does fine.

Going to the Oxford English Dictionary, we find that a disciple is "one who follows or attends upon another for the purpose of learning from him; a pupil or scholar." More explicitly: "A personal pupil or follower of any religious or (in more recent use) other teacher or master." This is the definition we're most used to, and it's the one the rttvik people have in mind.

But there's more. Here's the next definition, equally valid: "One who follows or is influenced by the doctrine or example of another; one who belongs to the 'school' of any leader of thought."

This is the sense in which anyone who wants to can, beyond a doubt, become Srila Prabhupada's disciple. Any sincere person can follow Srila Prabhupada's teachings and example. Anyone can join his school of thought, or, still further, his International Society for Krishna Consciousness. And ultimately one can become not only his disciple in spirit but his "initiated disciple" through the guru-parampara system.

In this sense, by the grace of Srila Prabhupada, one can become not only his disciple but at the same time the disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, the six Goswamis, and all the other acaryas in Srila Prabhupada's line.



"This," as Srila Prabhupada writes (Bg. 18.75), "is the mystery of the disciplic succession." One is linked through the transparent medium of the bona fide spiritual master, but at the same time "the experience is still direct."

We might envision the day when those who believe they have become directly "initiated disciples" of Srila Prabhupada through a rttvik--or from a picture, or in a dream--might challenge in court that they alone have the right to serve as executive directors for ISKCON properties. Only the direct disciples are bona fide, they might claim, not those who profess to be merely disciples of his disciples in succession. We leave it for you to decide how well this would conform--legally and spiritually--to the intention of Srila Prabhupada's will.

### Questions that matter--or do they?

We've now pretty well exhausted, as far as I can tell, the arguments put forward in favor of post-samadhi rttvik-guru doctrines. Whatever we haven't dealt with are merely variations on the same themes.

If we're now nearly convinced that none of these doctrines is valid, we're nearly ready to get on with the questions we should have been dealing with all along: What are the credentials of a bona fide spiritual master? Do any of Srila Prabhupada's disciples fit the bill? Before I surrender, how can I be assured that the person I'm approaching is legitimate?

But for those who subscribe to the "hard" version of the rttvik doctrine, such questions no longer matter. For it's Srila Prabhupada forever. The disciplic succession is finished.

For the advocates of the "hard/soft" version, too, the questions hardly ought to matter. For Srila Prabhupada will initiate eternally through his rttviks. And even if new gurus come along, they will merely be needless appendages. After all, who could be a greater guru than Srila Prabhupada? And why be initiated by anyone else? For the "hard/soft" people, too, "the eternal system of disciplic succession" is essentially over.

Those who stick to the "soft" version, in which the rttvik system runs until the appearance of pure devotees, have their special problems. Either they have to "wait for the messiah." Or else they will have to persuade the world that the messiah is already with us.

For when the pure devotee arrives, the rttvik system will cease. And who is to decide when he arrives? Will he need the unanimous approval of all ISKCON devotees? Or will a 2/3 majority be enough? Will he need to be recognized by a vote of the Governing Body Commission? Or should a panel of experts be appointed to certify we've got the genuine merchandise? If we need a panel, who should be on it?

Till he comes, of course, the credentials of a bona fide spiritual master don't matter. For again the only guru is Srila Prabhupada, and by his order the system of disciplic succession has been



Indefinitely suspended.

And then there are those who might believe that the next pure devotee, the self-effulgent acarya, is already with us. Some devotees may hold this belief even now. The problem is, the effulgence is apparent only to them. The rest of the world doesn't see it. And after he has come and gone, if he leaves no pure devotees behind him, what happens *then*? Will his rttviks be the only bona fide gurus? Or will it then be his rttviks and Srila Prabhupada's?

All right, enough. The time has come to leave the rttvik doctrines behind us.

### **Sealing the Case: What's Wrong with the P.S. Rttvik Doctrines?**

Before we finally do turn our backs to the post-samadhi rttvik-guru doctrines, let us look briefly at the additional reasons for rejecting them.

We could place those reasons into six categories:

1. Argument from a need for evidence.
2. Argument from a need to show precedent.
3. Argument from a need for good logic.
4. Argument from the consistency of Srila Prabhupada's teachings.
5. Argument from Srila Prabhupada's final instruction.
6. Argument from how Srila Prabhupada expressed his desires.
7. Argument from the need to reject new doctrines.

Now let us look at these briefly.

1. Argument from a need for evidence.

This argument is simple. As Srila Prabhupada taught us, the process of speaking in spiritual circles is to say something upheld by authorities.

Our authorities are guru, sadhu, and sastra. For us to accept that post-samadhi rttvik-guru theories are right, we should see statements in which guru, sadhu, and sastra directly endorse them. We don't. Therefore the theories should be rejected.

A first-class appeal to authority does not consist of authoritative statements linked with a line of logic: "Therefore he could have. . . Therefore he must have. . ." It consists of a clear, unequivocal statement that directly supports what you're trying to show.

What statements of this kind are available to support the p.s. rttvik-guru doctrines? None. Therefore the doctrines should be discarded.

Please note that the argument here is different from the "argument from a lack of counter-evidence" rejected before. We are not saying, "X is true. Prove that it isn't." It's not "You beat your wife. Prove that you don't." Rather, it's "If you believe that X is true, please show that it is." "Oh, do I beat my wife? All right, what's the evidence?"



Neither from guru nor sadhu nor sastra do the post-samadhi rittvik-guru doctrines have any evidence going for them. Therefore we should reject them.

## 2. Argument from a need to show precedent.

Again, a simple argument.

Srila Prabhupada usually did what was done by the predecessor acaryas. And never in the history of Gaudiya Vaisnavism, nor any other form of Vaisnavism, have we found any instance of a post-samadhi rttvik-guru system.

Yes, Srila Prabhupada *could have* put in place an unprecedented system. He *could have* done anything. But the lack of precedent gives a good reason to doubt that he did.

## 3. Argument from a need for good logic

The reasons given for accepting the p.s. rttvik-guru doctrines are poor. And why should we accept doctrines backed by poor reasons? We shouldn't.

## 4. Argument from a need for consistency with Srila Prabhupada's teachings.

The p.s. rttvik doctrines require us to accept that Srila Prabhupada, in his last few months, reversed what he'd taught for the previous ten years.

One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master. --Srimad Bhagavatam 2.9.43, purport Every student is expected to become acarya. Acarya means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his disciples. . . Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of the spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. *This is the law of disciplic succession.* --letter to Tusta Krsna Swami, December 2, 1975 (emphasis supplied) So we have got this message from Krsna, from Caitanya Mahaprabhu, from the six Gosvamis, later on Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Bhaktisiddhanta Thakura. And we are trying our bit also to distribute this knowledge. Now, tenth, eleventh, twelfth. . . My Guru Maharaja is tenth from Caitanya Mahaprabhu, I am eleventh, you are the twelfth. So distribute this knowledge. --Los Angeles arrival lecture, May 18, 1972

Commenting on the letter to Tusta Krsna Maharaja, a treatise advocating a p.s. rttvik doctrine says, "All the letter states is the normal process of disciplic succession: Guru departs and a *qualified* disciple continues initiating." (emphasis in original) The treatise then argues that because no one was qualified, Srila Prabhupada set up a p.s. rttvik system.

The faulty argument that since no one was qualified Srila Prabhupada "must have" set up a new system has been previously disposed of. What I want to focus on here is a simple point: That a



spiritual master initiates until his departure and then his disciples initiate next is the *normal* system. On this we are all in agreement. This is what Srila Prabhupada taught the entire time he was with us.<sup>3</sup>

The p.s. rtvik doctrines require us to accept that Srila Prabhupada-- in contradiction to more than ten years of his own consistent teaching--suddenly put aside the normal system and replaced it with a new innovation.

Asking us to accept this is simply asking too much.

#### 5. Argument from Srila Prabhupada's final instruction.

On May 28, 1977, when a deputation of GBC members asked Srila Prabhupada how initiations would go on after Srila Prabhupada's physical departure, his last words on the subject were these:

When I order you become guru, he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. Just see.

"Disciple of my disciple." The meaning is clear, and it's consistent with Srila Prabhupada always taught us.

For those who refuse to see it, no amount of argument will help. For the rest of us, there it is.

#### 6. Argument from how Srila Prabhupada expressed his desires.

Here is the place to recall, one last time, that when Srila Prabhupada wanted to do something different and new, he spared no pains to make himself clear. As his disciples will remember, when His Divine Grace had an important point to make, he would drive it into our thick heads again and again and again.

If Srila Prabhupada had wanted to initiate even after his physical departure, he wouldn't have merely disclosed this privately to only one conspiratorially minded disciple. Or packed it all into one pregnant word. Or left it for us to infer from a phrase about property directors.

Had Srila Prabhupada wanted to revolutionize the entire parampara system, you can bet your bottom dollar he would have spoken about it for days and hours and weeks on end. But he didn't, because he simply expected us to follow the normal system he had taught us for the past ten years.

Asking us to believe anything to the contrary is, again, simply asking too much.

#### 7. Argument from the need to reject new doctrines.

Srila Prabhupada entered samadhi in 1977. Post-samadhi rtvik-guru doctrines began appearing only in the mid-1980's.

After all the troubles we've been through since Srila Prabhupada's departure, after all the concoctions, after all the disasters, now we are supposed to put our faith in a truth that came to light only years



after Srila Prabhupada physically left us.

The teaching about parampara we all understood and repeated and agreed about till 1977, and for years after--out the window it goes.

Now, with no precedent from sastra, no example from previous acaryas, no clear and public instruction from Srila Prabhupada himself, we are supposed to set aside the normal system Srila Prabhupada taught us the whole time he was physically here. And we're supposed to buy into something entirely opposite, a new doctrine that has sprung up, amidst a swirl of controversy, half a decade or more after His Divine Grace has physically left.

As Srila Prabhupada used to say, "And I have to believe it?"

Please--that's asking far too much.

We remind you of the rule of thumb put forth at the head of this essay:

*If Srila Prabhupada didn't clearly and definitely say it, and if it first came up after 1977, whatever it is, don't trust it.*

### **So where does that leave us?**

It's now time to put the post-samadhi rttvik theories themselves into samadhi. And let us get on with genuine spiritual life.

What are the signs of a bona fide spiritual master? What qualifications must he have? How is such a guru to be found?

Such are the questions that should now concern us. Let us put wrong theories aside and move forward.

----- NOTES 1. Note for non-Americans: Ice cream is sold in dozens of elaborate flavors, but the most simple and commonplace is vanilla. So "plain vanilla" is an idiomatic term for anything that is simple, basic, unadorned, and standard. 2. Personal interview, January 26, 1996. 3. I'm skipping here the opportunity to offer many more quotes. For a point that everyone agrees on, to multiply the quotes seems needless.

Send Email to Jayadvaita Swami



After a few minutes the conversation

The teacher asked the students to all write down the names of the

Now, with the teacher's help, from each group, no more than two persons  
selected to discuss the subject with the teacher. The teacher  
himself was present at the time. The teacher asked the students to  
bring their papers and to read them aloud. The teacher then  
went through the papers and made notes on the board. The teacher  
outlined the main points of the papers and asked the students to  
decide on the main points of the papers and to write them down.

As the presentation was going on, the teacher was

Phase - the teacher was

We found that the teacher was

If the presentation of the papers was

So there does not seem to

It's now time to put the papers in the hands of the students

What are the points of the papers and to write them down

Such are the questions that the students should ask

for the purpose of the presentation. The teacher should ask the students  
to bring their papers and to read them aloud. The teacher then  
went through the papers and made notes on the board. The teacher  
outlined the main points of the papers and asked the students to  
decide on the main points of the papers and to write them down.

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decide on the main points of the papers and to write them down.



# 'HENCEFORWARD'

Drutakarma Dasa on 'henceforward'

Regarding printing 20,000 copies of 'Back To Godhead', I have appealed to 4 centers, namely New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and London to contribute \$750 monthly. I have got confirmation from Los Angeles, so I shall be glad to hear from New York also whether this center is going to hand over to me \$750 per month. I have no objection if this \$750 is collected in the way of advertisements from New York, but charges will be increased because we are going to print 20,000 copies henceforward." (Letter to Rayarama, February 20, 1969).

Let us imagine that Srila Prabhupada had left the planet soon after this letter had been written. Would it have been wrong for devotees to have printed more than 20,000 copies in the future? The word henceforward is obviously tied to a certain set of circumstances that could change in a very short period of time. Henceforward means, "given the current situation, we shall do like this."

In the case of the July 9 letter, the same implication is there. Given the current situation (Prabhupada still on the planet but too weak to even answer letters, devotees still requesting initiation from him) the process for initiation will go on as stated in the letter. Given that the usual system throughout history is that when a guru departs he ceases to accept disciples, Srila Prabhupada's departure would mark a major change of circumstances requiring a change in the system outlined in the July 9 letter.

Tamal Krishna Maharaj on 'henceforward':

*2 "If you worded it, what did you mean by this word?"*

'Henceforward' means something like, 'in the foreseeable future,' or, 'until further notice.' My service was to encourage Srila Prabhupada to survive his illness.

Drutakarma Dasa states:

Here is what Krishnakanta Desai has admitted so far:

1. The July 9 letter, although approved by Prabhupada, was not written by Prabhupada but was written by Tamal Krishna Goswami.
2. The July 9 letter does not directly mention Prabhupada's departure or what was supposed to happen after Prabhupada's departure regarding initiations.

Therefore, it is clear that the July 9 letter does not represent a final order written by Prabhupada about how initiations were to go on after his departure. It is as simple as that.



"Krishna is the first spiritual master, and when we become more interested then we have to go to a physical spiritual master."

Bg. Lecture, New York, 14 August, 1966

"A person who is liberated acharya and guru cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and acharya by strictly following the disciplic succession."

New York, 26 April, 1968

"Every student is expected to become Acharya. Acharya means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his disciples..."

Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide Guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your Spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bona fide Spiritual Master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy."

New Delhi, 2 December, 1975

"You each be guru," he said. "As I have five thousand disciples or ten thousand, so you have ten thousand each. In this way, create branches and branches of the Caitanya tree."

Mayapur GBC meetings 1976







